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# Social Stratification and Inequality in South Africa at the End of Apartheid


## *Abstract*

*This paper initiates the project of mapping the class structure of South Africa at the end of the apartheid era. The theoretical bases of class in the advanced industrialised societies of the North are revised to render them more appropriate for South African conditions. This entails emphasising not only the differences between employers and employees and those between working people in service relationships and those with labour contracts, but also the differences between those with formal labour contracts and those who sell their labour on a more informal basis. Data from household surveys is used to construct several alternative but crude class categories. It is shown that there are strong correlations between class and income, children's schooling and aspects of health. Further research is required to demonstrate that class is – or is not – consequential in a range of other respects.*


## 1. Introduction

Post-apartheid South Africa remains a deeply unequal society. The *economic* dimensions of this inequality have been explored in considerable detail (see especially Leibbrandt and Woolard, 2001; Bhorat, Leibbrandt *et al*., 2001). We know who is poor and who is rich. We also know why people have different incomes, in the sense that we know how income is correlated with education, access to employment, and the claims that can be made on the state (through welfare programmes) or kin (through private remittances of income). We are beginning to understand how and why incomes vary over time, and even how inequalities are reproduced across generations. But we know very little about the *social* dimensions of inequality. How and why do some people enjoy better health and live longer than others? Or have different patterns of marriage, friendship and recreation? Or have different social or political attitudes? Sociologists are yet to make a major contribution to the study of contemporary inequalities, even on eminently social topics on which economists are working (for example, the reproduction of inequality across generations).

The study of inequality has been dominated by economists because sociologists have been slow to contribute any theoretically-informed and empirically-rich analysis of social stratification in post-apartheid South Africa. Empirical analyses of inequality are divided between analyses using easily measured individual or household level data (such as educational attainment or employment) and descriptive accounts using data for *racial groups* (either in aggregate or as averages). Yet it is obvious that South African society is structured in terms of social groups other than race. Industrialised and semi-industrialised societies are typically structured in terms of a hierarchy of unequal *classes*. Is class important in the 'new' South Africa? On this topic, social scientists have been largely silent, which is quite remarkable given the strength of Marxist scholarship in the 1970s and 1980s. Sociologists, especially, have neither theorised adequately the theory of social stratification in contemporary South Africa nor engaged with the mass of data that is (or could readily be) available from the explosion of national or other large-scale surveys since 1993 (see further Seekings, 2001).

Elsewhere we have argued that the basis of social stratification shifted under apartheid from race to class: the privileges enjoyed by white South Africans were increasingly derived from their class positions and less and less from racial discrimination, whilst some black South Africans benefited from upward social mobility despite the lingering legacy of racial discrimination (Seekings and Nattrass, forthcoming). Now, in the 'new' South Africa, class inequalities are highly visible all around us. The growth of the black elite and 'middle class' is evident in advertising as in real life. At the same time, huge numbers of black people are confined to an 'underclass' of unemployment, poverty and social exclusion. Most white people have retained the advantages conferred by their class position at the end of apartheid. But, at the same time, a small number of white people are downwardly mobile. The use of aggregate data for racial 'groups' or data on the average for racial 'groups' both obscures the social stratification within racial 'groups' and the extent to which race has ceased to be the key cause of inequality. Indeed, it might be that the emphasis on race, especially in official statistics, serves to obscure even the *possibility* of collecting data on other criteria, such as class.

Pointing to the importance of class in South Africa does not mean that people are located in the class structure independently of the country's racialised history. Nor does it mean that there are no cultural or social differences between people with different origins, traditions and racial classifications. It is simply to suggest that people are rich or poor, enjoy good or bad health, and have at least some attitudes that depend primarily on the work they do. Rich (and healthy) households in South Africa are rich because the people in them have well-paid work or have assets from

which they derive an income (in the form of rent or interest or profit). Poor (and less healthy) households are poor because the people in them have no or poorly-paid jobs and do not have the assets that generate an income. Who owns assets and who can command high wages for their labour clearly reflects past practices of racial discrimination and dispossession. Inequality thus reflects the class structure, even if places in the class structure are filled primarily according to the racial structure of society in the past.

This working paper initiates the project of mapping the social structure of South Africa at the end of the apartheid era. It provides both theoretical foundations for and empirical evidence on the class structure. The data used is primarily from the 1993 PSLSD survey, conducted by the University of Cape Town together with the World Bank; this data has been used widely in analyses of poverty and inequality. A large part of this paper is dedicated to the discussion of the methodologies of mapping the class structure. Data from household income and expenditure surveys (such as the PSLSD survey) are the best available data that we have for South Africa, but the fact that these surveys were not designed for the purpose of analysing class means that they pose a series of problems. It is important to recognise the shortcuts taken, and the assumptions and reasoning that underlie these shortcuts. For those readers who are put off by the methodological discussion, the key results are set out in Table 11 and Figure 3.

Readers will see that this paper provides several alternative approaches to the task of mapping class in South Africa. Tables 7, 10 and 11 set out the results according to each of these approaches. The reason for this is that there is no 'correct' way of mapping the class structure, i.e. there are no 'correct' class categories to be used for any given society. Defining class categories for any particular society involves maintaining a balance between two poles. On the one hand are the theoretical foundations of class. On the other is the empirical study of the effects or consequences of class. The project of mapping the class structure *can* be conducted using categories pre-determined by one or other theoretical framework. This might prove to illuminate the theory, but it seems to us to be nonsensical if we accept that real societies differ and our goal is to understand better one particular society. As the leading neo-Marxist scholar of class, Eric Ohlin Wright, has remarked, any such use of class is simply 'an arbitrary convention'. The main theoretical approaches to class have developed in part at least through their utility to social scientists in understanding the patterns and dynamics of social and political life in the advanced capitalist countries. The value of class categories depends in part on the correlation between the categories and other variables. In other words, the empirical value of class categories lies in part in their use in predicting other things – such as inter-generational mobility, lifestyles, attitudes and consciousness, political behaviour and so on.

To define classes for the South African context we need to reflect on the appropriate theoretical bases of class, noting differences between South African society and the much-studied societies of the advanced industrialised countries, and to take into account evidence on the consequences of class. In South Africa, we have very little idea as to how consequential class is, and thus only a general idea as to what versions of class or class categories are most appropriate. As we shall see, in some respects South African society is different from society in the advanced capitalist countries, and our class analysis should surely take this into account. We should not simply and uncritically apply class categories developed in different kinds of society. Until we have a fuller understanding of the consequentiality of using alternative class categories, however, we should remain cognisant of a range of alternatives – including ones not set out here, as the alternatives here are far from exhaustive; the diversity offered here might be viewed best as merely illustrative.

While recognising the preliminary character of our class analysis, we do favour one class schema. This is the scheme summarised in Table 11. It is theoretically informed, taking into account economic power in terms of occupation, property ownership and business activity. It is informed by theory and has promisingly demonstrable empirical consequences (even if both the theoretical and empirical bases are still limited). A separate and detailed analysis of the class position of the unemployed – in an accompanying working paper (Seekings, 2003) – refines this class schema and does not require any substantial revision.

The penultimate section of this paper examines the relationship between our class categories and race, and the geographical distribution of the classes. Crucially, we show that the relationship between race and class at the end of apartheid was no longer a neat one: whilst the poorer classes were overwhelmingly African in composition, white people no longer held a monopoly on membership of the richer classes. Finally, this paper shows that class (using this class scheme) is significant in important respects, in that there is a strong correlation between class and household income, living conditions, health and the inter-generational reproduction of inequality through the education of children. These correlations exist within racial groups as well as within the population as a whole, emphasising the extent to which inequality in South Africa should not be understood in terms of race alone.

# 2. Theoretical Foundations

Social stratification can be analysed in many different ways. First, societies can be analysed in terms of the categories which people themselves use, and the class structure can be mapped according to the categories in which people put themselves. There do not appear to be any studies on this kind of class imagery in South Africa. Second, class can be seen in simple gradational terms, according to income (or another material aspect of life). This approach cannot, obviously, help us to understand the relationship between class and inequality in the distribution of income – since class is defined by relative income. Thirdly, class can be defined in terms of the productive assets (for example, land or human capital/education) or entitlements (for example, to an old-age pension) 'owned' by individuals or households. The fourth way of analysing class is to see class *relationally*, i.e. in terms of the relations between classes.

The most important analyses of class as a relational concept derive from the works of the two great German scholars, Karl Marx and Max Weber. For Marxists, class is rooted in the patterns of ownership and control that determine relationships around production. The 'two great classes' of capitalist society are the bourgeoisie – who own and control the material means of production – and the proletariat, who own only their labour power, and have to work for the bourgeoisie to survive. The relationship between these classes is an exploitative one – and this concept of exploitation is integral to Marxist class analysis. Weberians, in contrast, focus more on the different 'life chances' determined in the market by factors such as skills and education as well as property. Whereas Marxists focus primarily on exploitation and the control of labour effort, Weberians emphasise the differential control of 'market capacities', and hence income. Both are concerned with aspects of economic power. For Marxists, economic power is defined in relation to production alone. For Weberians, it is defined also in relation to distribution.

Over time, the differences between Marxist and Weberian scholars of class have diminished. Weberians joke that 'inside every neo-Marxist there seems to be a Weberian struggling to get out', whilst neo-Marxists retort that 'inside every left-wing Weberian there is a Marxist struggling to stay hidden' (Wright, 1997: 34-4). Weberians are now very much concerned with people's occupations, i.e. their work as well as their market situations, while recent Marxists analyse contemporary capitalist society in terms of authority and skills or expertise as well as relationships to the means of production. At the same time, as Westergaard (1995: 24) has written, the Marxist concern with 'who does what' has blended with the supposedly Weberian concern with 'who gets what'. Marxists have come to see capitalism as a system of distribution and not just as one of exploitation. Marxists and Weberians ask similar questions of the class structure: How permeable are

boundaries between classes, i.e. how much mobility is there between classes either within someone's lifetime or between generations? What is the relationship between class, consciousness and action?

There is now considerable overlap between the empirical categories used by the pre-eminent Marxist and Weberian scholars in the world today, namely the American Erik Olin Wright and the Briton John Goldthorpe. Wright says of his own, neo-Marxist work:

> 'The empirical categories themselves can be interpreted in a Weberian or hybrid manner. Indeed, as a practical set of operational categories, the class structure matrix used in this book does not dramatically differ from the class typology used by Goldthorpe ... As is usually the case in sociology, the empirical categories of analysis are *under*determined by the theoretical frameworks within which they are generated or interpreted' (Wright, 1997: 37).

One important factor driving this process of operational convergence between Marxist and Weberians is the need to analyse the growth of non-manual occupations. Whereas, at the beginning of the twentieth century most work in the advanced industrialised societies was manual, by the end of the century most work there was non-manual. Professionals and management are easily separated out, but what about employees with some, but limited, skill or authority? Goldthorpe uses a seven-class scheme, in the middle of which are three 'intermediate' classes: routine non-manual, largely clerical, employees in administration and commerce, and rank-and-file employees in services; small proprietors and self-employed artisans; and lower-grade technicians and supervisors of manual workers; the schema is set out in an Appendix to this working paper (see further Goldthorpe, 1997; Crompton, 1993: 58-9). Wright, too, is concerned with the 'problem of the middle class among employees'. By distinguishing between occupations according to skills and authority, Wright's expanded typology of class separates out skilled supervisors, non-skilled supervisors, experts and skilled workers (Wright, 1997: 19-26).

## Choosing between Alternative Constructions of Class

Whilst there might be considerable similarities now between the approaches used by neo-Marxist and neo-Weberian analysts, there remain important differences in the ways in which approaches are applied. The construction of class categories in practice requires an assessment of the alternative ways of operationalising class analysis. The ideal way of doing this can be illustrated through recent deliberations

in Britain on how to revise the official class categories used by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) in the national census. In 1994 the Office of National Statistics commissioned the Economic and Social Research Council (the British equivalent of South Africa's Human Sciences Research Council) to review and recommend revisions to the social classifications used in the British census (Rose and O'Reilly, 1997).

The review process began by identifying eight different schemas in use for delineating social classifications in Britain (*ibid*: 1-8):

- The *Social Class based on Occupation* schema used by the ONS (Registrar-General). Originating in the mid-nineteenth century, but fully constructed in the early twentieth century, this essentially skill-based classification has been used primarily in relation to fertility and mortality. It has no theoretical basis.
- The *Socio-Economic Groups* classification also used by the ONS since 1951. Designed by a sociologist, it has also been used in studies of health and mortality, but has not been widely used in studies of social stratification or mobility.
- John *Goldthorpe*'s neo-Weberian social class schema, based on occupations (see the Appendix to this working paper).
- The Institute of Practitioners in Advertising (IPA) *Social Grade* schema. This is widely used in market research, including in defining markets, planning and selling advertising, and discriminating across markets and products. The implementation of the schema is thought to be rather erratic, relying on interviewer discretion, but the scheme has the advantage over the three schemas considered above in that it covers the entire population, rather than just people with occupations.
- Eric Ohlin *Wright*'s neo-Marxist class schema. This is said to be 'theoretically rigorous' but studies in the UK have found it tends 'to work poorly in empirical application' (*ibid*: 7).
- The *Hall-Jones* occupational scale, developed in 1950, in which occupations are graded according to their perceived prestige. The guidelines used in deriving the scale were never published.
- The *Hope-Goldthorpe* occupational scale (1974), in which occupations are graded according to their social desirability, i.e. their reputation; as such it is a measure more of cognitive judgement about the desirability of jobs than it is of prestige alone. The scale relies on popular opinion to define what criteria are important in assessing the desirability of a job, and how to weight different criteria.
- The *Cambridge Scale*, in which occupations are graded according to the associative patterns (i.e. marriage and friendships) of people in each occupation.

This scale in effect measures 'the market outcomes of different jobs and the lifestyles associated with them'; it is not a measure of status.

The critical evaluation of alternative schema requires some criteria to be applied. Ideally, these criteria should suggest clear ways of validating any particular schema.

The first key criterion relates to the *theoretical* foundations or derivation of a class schema. How explicitly and coherently is the classification or scale related to theoretical ideas? 'Internal' or 'criterion validity' are the terms used to describe the extent to which the measures used in a schema succeed in operationalizing the underlying theoretical concept. Any schema is necessarily a proxy for other variables that are difficult to measure directly, but are they a good proxy? (see further O'Reilly and Rose, 1997). Wright's schema is often said to have strong theoretical foundations, whilst Goldthorpe's is said to involve a 'retreat from theory'. This has been challenged by supporters of Goldthorpe's schema. While Goldthorpe's class schema may not be rooted in a theory of society comparable to the grandeur of Marxism, it is conceptually well grounded in the distinction between employers, employees and the self-employed, and between employment relations based on a service relationship and those based on a labour contract (Marshall *et al*., 1997a: 202-4). Moreover, it has been demonstrated that Goldthorpe's schema displays criterion validity in Britain. The conceptual foundation of the schema should be reflected in variables such as forms of remuneration, promotion opportunities and autonomy, especially as regards time. Classes defined in terms of Goldthorpe's schema do indeed display minor intra-class differences but evident inter-class differences with respect to these kinds of variables (see Goldthorpe, 1997: 42-8).

The second key criterion relates to the *consequences* of class. Does the schema have the capacity to display variation? How well does the classification or scale identify and display variation in dependent variables, the relationship of which to class or status is of interest? The satisfaction of this criterion is generally termed 'external' or 'construct validity'. The measures relate to other variables of interest in ways predicted by the theory. Wright (1997) reports results for a range of countries that suggests that his schema has such construct validity, but Marshall *et al.* (1988; also Marshall, 1997a) found that its performance was greatly inferior to Goldthorpe's schema in Britain. In Britain at least, the construct validity of Goldthorpe's schema has been well established, in studies ranging from inter-generational mobility to attitudes and from political behaviour to health.

Ideally, a good schema would satisfy two further criteria (suggested by Goldthorpe, cited in Rose and O'Reilly, 1997: 10). First, is there 'analytic transparency', i.e.

does the classification or scale, at the same time as displaying variation, help the analyst to see further just how associations or correlations are being brought about? Secondly, is the method of producing the classification explicit and replicable?

The ideal schema (or schemas) would have a clear theoretical basis, would be readily replicable, would be demonstrably consequential, and would be amenable to analysis linking the theoretical basis with the empirical consequences. In Britain, Goldthorpe's class schema rules the roost. It has strong theoretical underpinnings, and these have been validated empirically. The ESRC project recommended that the ONS introduce a new interim social classification similar to Goldthorpe's scheme (but extending to cover individuals without occupations). The new classification would replace the existing 'Social Class based on Occupation' and 'Socio-Economic Group' schemas (although the new classification would allow for the continued application also of the old schemes). The classification would be interim pending further research. The ESRC project did report on initial testing of the new schema. O'Reilly and Rose (1997) find that the new classification appears to exhibit criterion validity. It also appears to be consequential, i.e. exhibits construct validity, in a range of fields (see Arber, 1997; Fitzpatrick *et al.*, 1997).

## Constructing Classes in Southern Societies

The problem in countries in the South is both conceptual and operational: how should class be conceptualised? How should and can it be measured? This problem is most pronounced in societies that remain, at least in part, agrarian. The last major debate on class in Southern Africa, in the 1970s and early 1980s, revolved around the question of how to classify migrant workers who retained a foot in agrarian society. Murray (1981), for example, showed that, for Basotho men, a sustained period of wage labour as a migrant worker on South African mines was necessary for investment in land as late as the 1970s. At different points of their lives, these men were unambiguously wage workers and struggling peasants. But, as Murray himself showed for Lesotho, growing differentiation and landlessness was rapidly eroding the remnants of peasant society. In South Africa, by the early 1990s, smallholder agriculture was of negligible importance (see Seekings, 2000; Seekings and Nattrass, forthcoming).

The decline of smallholder agriculture has not sufficed to bring the social structure of semi-industrialised southern countries into line with those of the industrialised north. The social structure of countries such as Brazil is distinctively different to that of, say, Germany or Britain. Portes (1985) delineated the class structure in Latin America. At the top, as in northern countries, are small capitalist and 'bureaucratic-technical' classes. Below them is the 'formal proletariat', comprising

about 20 percent of the economically active population. Portes identifies an 'informal petty bourgeoisie'. Finally, there is a huge 'informal proletariat' or semi-proletariat, originally heavily rural (and with one foot in smallholder production) but increasingly urban (and involved instead in informal entrepreneurial activity). This class comprises as much as two-thirds of the economically active population. It is certainly possible to apply class schema that distinguish between, crucially, manual, non-manual and agricultural employment. A series of studies have applied versions of Goldthorpe's schema (e.g. Costa-Ribeiro and Scalon, 2001; for an overview, see Aguiar, 2002). But does the use of such class schema exhibit sufficient 'criterion' and 'construct' validity as in northern countries? Does Goldthorpe's foundational distinction between service relationships and labour contracts mean the same in Brazil's informal sector as in the more formal environment of (say) Britain? And showing that we can count the numbers of individuals in (or moving into and out of) these class categories does not mean that these categories 'count', in the sense of being consequential.

Analyses of class in southern countries are constrained severely by the limits of available data. Data on occupations is typically collected for only one part of the working population, or is collected in ways that are hard to translate into the conventional (northern) class schema. There is rarely any data on what class categories mean in the local context. And there is rarely much data on the consequences of class. All of these constraints hold for South Africa. In the analysis that follows, I begin to explore class in the South African context, but the analysis is best seen as exploratory. As I shall discuss in the concluding comments, further and novel research is required to 'count' South African classes, to show that class counts, and most importantly to count the classes that count.

## Occupational Class in South Africa

Given the overwhelming dependence of South African households on wages as a source of income (Seekings, 2000; Bhorat, Leibbrandt *et al*., 2001), occupations must be the starting-point for analyses of class in South Africa. The leading study of occupational class in South Africa – by Owen Crankshaw (1997) – employed a similar approach to Wright and Goldthorpe, although its ambition was very limited. Crankshaw's study focused on the changing relationship between racial and class divisions during the apartheid period. He quantified and analysed the pattern of 'African advancement' into occupations previously monopolised by white people: semi-skilled and skilled employment, white-collar work (especially in the service sector), semi-professional occupations (especially teaching and nursing), and – to a very limited extent – managerial and professional work. Crankshaw sought to identify how the dynamics of capitalist production and apartheid policy shaped the racial composition of different occupations. His study

touched on issues of social mobility and the permeability of class boundaries, but he approached these in terms of aggregate occupational categories, not of individual or inter-generational mobility.

Crankshaw's ambition was limited in that, unlike Goldthorpe and Wright, he made no attempt to show that – or how – 'class counts', i.e. he did not examine the consequences of class. In Crankshaw's work, class was not analysed as an independent variable. He made little attempt to examine how class (or even the racial composition of class categories) was consequential. To some extent he treated class – or rather, the racial composition of occupational class categories – as a dependent variable, offering some explanation of changes in the occupational class structure and especially the racial composition of occupational class categories. But his concern was primarily to document the changing racial composition of occupational class categories, in much the same way as scholars elsewhere have examined the changing gender composition of occupational class categories.

Crankshaw's study was based on the government's Manpower Survey. The Manpower Survey collected detailed data on occupation (using about six hundred categories) and other aspects of employment. From the mid-1960s, it was conducted every year or second year, using a sample of industrial and service sector employers (including government institutions). In 1989, the sample comprised 12 800 companies (i.e. employers). The questionnaire was sent to company managers, and there was a high response rate (with 90 percent completing the questionnaire) (Crankshaw, 1997: 8).

*Table 1. Crankshaw's occupational classification, 1992*

| *Occupational Category* | *Number* | *Percentage* |
|---|---|---|
| Top managers | 54 947 | 1 |
| Middle managers | 201 054 | 3 |
| Professionals | 179 033 | 3 |
| Semi-professionals | 706 522 | 12 |
| Routine white collar | 963 594 | 17 |
| Routine policing | 267 587 | 5 |
| Supervisors | 204 566 | 3 |
| Artisans/apprentices | 298 095 | 5 |
| Semi-skilled | 1 423 361 | 24 |
| Drivers | 155 064 | 3 |
| Unskilled manual | 1 053 999 | 18 |
| Unskilled menial | 325 691 | 6 |
| Total | 5 833 513 | 100 |

Source: Table provided by Owen Crankshaw using data from the 1992 Manpower Survey

Crankshaw combined the detailed categories into twelve composite categories, as set out in Table 1 (using the 1992 survey data). These figures are estimates, since the results from the survey sample are inflated to reflect the total universe of employment in South Africa. In an appendix, Crankshaw (1997a: 123-140) lists the occupations he has combined into each of these composite categories. The category 'top manager' is limited to managing directors and general managers, and is thus very small. 'Middle manager' includes middle management, i.e. managers of departments within companies or government institutions, managers of shops, hotels, mines, and so on. 'Professionals' includes occupations such as engineers, architects and surveyors, doctors, academics, lawyers and accountants – but excludes teachers, nurses, technicians and priests who are all categorised as 'semi-professional'. 'Routine white-collar' includes occupations such as bank and office clerks, cashiers, typists and telephonists, air hostesses, shop assistants, salesmen and agents, ticket inspectors, postmen and chefs. 'Routine policing' includes the military, police and employees in the private security industry. 'Supervisors' is self-explanatory. 'Artisans/apprentices' comprises skilled worker occupations such as bricklayers, plumbers, bakers, hairdressers, fitters and turners. 'Semi-skilled' comprises machine-operators. 'Drivers' is also self-explanatory. 'Unskilled manual' includes labourers, and 'unskilled menial' comprises occupations such as petrol pump attendants, cleaners, gardeners and waiters – i.e. unskilled jobs that do not entail heavy manual work.

These class categories are derived from what Crankshaw calls 'an eclectic classification scheme [sic] which incorporated both workplace and labour market

dynamics' (1997: 6). Crankshaw claims that Goldthorpe's schema is inadequate because 'it does not provide any basis for understanding how the occupational structure is itself reproduced and changed' (*ibid*: 5). It therefore needs to be combined with elements from labour process theory, which allows for an analysis of the process of segmentation (and resegmentation) of the 'labour market', or rather labour markets. The logic of this critique of Goldthorpe is not clear, but it is of little import in that, as Crankshaw himself emphasises, the ensuing schema is not very different from a Goldthorpean one. His schema apparently takes into account the education and training required for different occupations, the authority involved, and the salary or wage. Crankshaw does not explain how, in practice, his schema differs from Goldthorpe's, nor does he demonstrate that it is superior by any specified criterion. Crankshaw was unable to test the internal or criterion validity of his class categories. There was no data, from the Manpower Survey or anywhere else, on the detailed character of employment relationships under apartheid.

The Manpower Survey did not collect data on some very important occupational categories, including farm managers and workers, and domestic workers employed by individual households (Crankshaw, 1997a: 8). In South Africa, there were in the mid-1990s about one million farmworkers in regular or casual employment, and almost as many in domestic work (some of whom will have been included in the data above, as they work for companies or government departments rather than private households). As a survey of employment, the Manpower Survey also excluded the self-employed, whether shopkeeper or hawker, doctor or herbalist.

For Crankshaw's purposes, the omission of domestic and agricultural work is of limited consequence. These were overwhelmingly dominated by black workers through the apartheid period. Whilst there might have been shifts in the racial composition of occupations in these sectors – with, for example, black workers moving up into semi-skilled, skilled and supervisory agricultural jobs, and perhaps black workers replacing coloured workers in some unskilled jobs – these shifts were probably not as substantial as the movement of black workers into semi-skilled, skilled, white-collar and semi-professional occupations in industry and other parts of the service sector. For our purposes, however, it is necessary to reflect further on those occupations excluded from – and those relegated to the lowest class categories in – Crankshaw's schema. Below I shall argue that the employment relationship of workers in what I shall call the 'marginal working class' is quite different to those in the 'core working class', on theoretical grounds.

## Mediated Class Locations

Even if we were to include farm managers and workers, and all domestic workers, we would still only have occupational classifications for about eight million individuals (as of c.1992). These – together with the very small number of people who own factories and farms, and employ other people to work for them – have what Wright (1997: 26) terms 'direct class locations'. Yet South Africa has a population of about forty million people. What do we do about the other thirty-two million people? These are people who are not involved in employment (either as employers or as employees). They include children, 'housewives' (or homemakers), retired people, people living off their assets, students and the unemployed.

Many of these have what Wright (1997: 27) terms 'mediated class locations'. They are the children, spouses or other direct dependants of someone who has a job. The reasoning behind this takes us back to the underlying question of what we are trying to do by assigning class positions. Wright has this to say:

> 'The central point of trying to assign a class location is to clarify the nature of the lived experiences and material interests the individual is likely to have. Being 'in' a class location means that you do certain things and certain things happen to you (lived experience) and you face certain strategic alternatives for pursuing your material well-being (class interests). Jobs embedded within social relations of production are one of the ways individuals are linked to such interests and experiences, but not the only way. Families provide another set of social relations which tie people to the class structure' (1997: 523-4).

The concept of a 'mediated class location' requires that we treat the household as a unit of analysis – either as well as, or instead of, the individual. The jobless wife of a worker has a mediated class location by virtue of her membership of a household that includes a worker. Similarly, different members of a household may work in occupations that we would categorise to different classes. Wright prefers to treat individuals as having multiple, perhaps contradictory, class locations. This would introduce unmanageable complexity into our analysis of the social structure of post-apartheid South Africa, and instead we shall allocate a single class position to each household (i.e. to each and every member of it). What criteria shall we use to do this? The 'dominance' approach entails identifying a dominant individual, and assigning his or her class position to the other members of the household (Runciman, 1990: 382-3). Goldthorpe controversially advocates categorising the entire household according to the position of the breadwinner, who (in the advanced capitalist societies) is usually male – but this has been widely criticised

(see Marshall *et al.*, 1997b: 106-125; Wright, 1997: 239-317), although Wright also concludes from his empirical analysis that the mediated class positions of women should be prioritised over their own 'independent' positions (Wright, 1997: 538). What should we do in the case of a lawyer who supports five unskilled, unemployed younger relatives. Are they all members of the 'professional' class by virtue of their breadwinner's individual class location?

This is, in large part, an empirical issue. How, in South Africa, does cohabitation affect the behaviour and attitudes of dependant members of the household? There is little reason to believe that patterns of influence in a historically patrilineal, African society would be the same as in western-style nuclear families. But many African households in South Africa are far removed from the 'traditionally' dominant types (see the debate on this, including Ziehl, 2001, 2002 and Russell, 2002). Unfortunately, there appears to be no data on attitudes and behaviour *within* families or households in South Africa. In the absence of any data to the contrary, it is probably best to assume that the 'dominance' approach holds in South Africa as elsewhere, but *not* to assume that adult men are always the dominant individual in the household, determining households' class position.

In South Africa, moreover, about 39 percent of households have nobody in regular employment, and about 34 percent have nobody in either casual or regular employment. The members of these households do not even have a 'mediated class location' in the sense used by Wright. These are households that are dependent on government old-age pensions, remittances from people who do not live in the household (including, most obviously, migrant workers), and (to a very limited extent) agricultural production and minor informal sector activity. Some of these might be classifiable in terms of past occupation: pensioners and the unemployed might be classified in terms of the last job they had. Households dependent on remittances might be classified in terms of the occupational position of the person remitting money to them. But some cannot be classified even indirectly in occupational terms. Should we use the concept of an 'underclass' of long-term unemployed – as has been suggested, and assessed, in the advanced capitalist societies where unemployment rates are much lower (Marshall *et al.*, 1997c: 86-105; Wright, 1997: 28-9)?

In summary, if we wish to map the social structure of South Africa as a whole, we have to confront three related, intractable methodological problems: (1) Are households or individuals the appropriate unit of analysis? (2) How should we relate the social class position of jobless individuals in households to the occupational classification of those household members who have jobs? And (3) how should we identify the social class position of individuals in households where nobody has a job and hence no clear-cut occupational classification? Later we shall

identify a further problem: (4) how do we allocate a class position to an individual or household who or which combines an occupation with income from property or business activities? There are no uniquely ‘right’ answers to these questions; our answers are dependent on our assumptions (which may well be rooted in ideology). But our analysis of the social structure will be strongly influenced by the answers we give.

# 3. Mapping Class: An Occupation-Based Analysis

The easiest place to start is to analyse households in terms of the occupations of working members. The PSLSD survey collected details of the kind of occupation, kind of employer and economic sector of every member of each household with either regular or casual employment. This data can be used to assign a crude or approximate class position to each and every employed individual. The class categories of workers in each household can then be used to allocate a class location to each household – and every member of it.

## Classifying Individuals' Occupations

The PSLSD survey divided occupations into eleven categories. The representative sample of 8 848 households in the survey included a total of 7 515 workers in regular employment, and 945 workers with casual employment. The distribution of workers in regular and casual employment between these occupational categories is presented in Table 2.

*Table 2. PSLSD occupational categories, 1993*

| *Occupational Code* | *Occupations* | *Regular (%)* | *Casual (%)* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 01 | Professional, semi-professional and technical | 14,5 | 4,8 |
| 02 | Managerial, executive and administrative | 6,4 | 1,5 |
| 03 | Clerical and sales | 14,7 | 12,6 |
| 04 | Transport, delivery and communications | 5,3 | 3,2 |
| 05 | Service | 14,9 | 19,2 |
| 06 | Farming and related occupations | 4,3 | 4,2 |
| 07 | Artisan, apprentices and related occupations | 7,0 | 9,2 |
| 08 | Production foremen and supervisors | 3,2 | 1,2 |
| 09 | Operators, production workers and related semi-skilled occupations | 9,7 | 4,6 |
| 10 | Labourers | 19,9 | 38,3 |
| 11 | Other | 0,2 | 1,1 |
| | Total | 100 | 100 |

These categories are both too detailed and too broad for our purposes. Ideally, we would be able to reclassify them into categories similar to those suggested by Goldthorpe or Crankshaw. Unfortunately, there is insufficient detail in the PSLSD survey to do this. We are forced to identify broader class categories that are, we hope, reasonable proxies for a more finely-tuned schema. We reorganise these into the following five class categories:

- upper class (UC): managers and professionals;
- semi-professional class (SPC): teachers and nurses;
- intermediate class (IC): routine white-collar, skilled and supervisory;
- core working class (CWC): semi-skilled and unskilled workers (except farm- and domestic workers);
- marginal working class (MWC): farm- and domestic workers.

Does this five-class schema have any theoretical basis? The basis of this schema is, like for Goldthorpe and Crankshaw, the nature of the employment relationship. Each category, it is hoped, combines occup-ations with similar economic power in the sense that they have broadly similar employment relationships, i.e. in terms of economic security, career prospects and autonomy (see Marshall *et al*., 1997a: 22-24, 202-3). The upper and semi-professional classes in our schema correspond theoretically to Goldthorpe's classes (I and II) in which the employment relationship is a service relationship, characterised by the prospect of incremental advancement (whether salary increments or a career path), employment security,

and a high degree of autonomy. (The Goldthorpe class schema is set out in an Appendix at the end of this paper). Semi-professional occupations are distinguished from professional occupations, as Crankshaw recommends, because the qualification required is lower (usually a diploma rather than a degree), there are limited prospects for upward occupational mobility, and they lack authority in the workplace (Crankshaw, 1997a: 9-10). The core and marginal working classes correspond theoretically to Goldthorpe's classes VIIa and VIIb, in which the employment relationship is based on a labour contract, where labour is provided under close supervision and a closely-regulated payment system. Our intermediate class encompasses Goldthorpe's classes III and V, in which the employment relationship combines elements of the service relationship and the labour contract. Thus the five classes in our proposed class schema are intended to distinguish between occupations based on service relationships and those based on labour contracts.

There are two important respects, however, in which our proposed class schema here differs from Goldthorpe's. Firstly, we have also included in the intermediate class skilled manual workers (Goldthorpe's class VI). This is based on the supposition that, in the South African context, skilled manual workers often enjoy a degree of economic power comparable to supervisory and routine non-manual employees, largely because of the high capital intensity of South African industry. Secondly, we suggest that there is a key distinction between the core and marginal working classes, based on the nature of the labour contract. In the South African context, as in Brazil, a large number of workers sell their labour for wages without any formal contract: their conditions of work are quite distinctive and they are especially vulnerable to employers. These clearly include many farm and domestic workers, and arguably also growing numbers of other workers (see further below). In addition, we have at this stage not accommodated the self-employed, who fall into Goldthorpe's classes IVa, IVb and IVc; we shall address this issue later.

Fitting these categories to the PSLSD data is a crude exercise because the data does not include detailed descriptions of occupations but rather coded variables. Table 2 sets out the occupational codes used in the PSLSD data. In our schema, the upper class (UC) is defined as comprising occupational codes 01 and 02, excepting those categorised as semi-professionals. The semi-professional class (SPC) comprises occupational codes 01 and 02 if employed by the state and in the educational sector (for teachers) or the health sector, if schooling is less than a degree (for nurses). The intermediate class (IC) is composed of occupational codes 03, 04, 07 and 08. The core working class (CWC) comprises occupational codes 05, 06, 09 and 10, excepting those employed in the agriculture/fishing/forestry sector or the domestic services sector. The marginal working class (MWC) comprises occupational codes 05, 06, 09 and 10 if employed in the agriculture/fishing/forestry sector or the

domestic services sector. Two of the PSLSD occupational categories are difficult to allocate: (04) Transport, delivery and communications occupations, and (05) Service occupations. Both probably include some workers who should be defined as intermediate and others who are more appropriately considered as working. Crankshaw has similar problems with his categories of 'drivers' and 'routine policing', which encompass variously skilled occupations. The categorisation above is open to many criticisms: cleaners employed by firms are probably included in the marginal working class (MWC) rather than the core working class (CWC), unskilled night-watchmen or security guards in the intermediate class (IC) rather than core working class (CWC), and so on. The categories must be viewed as crude.

Ideally, we would examine the internal or criterion validity of this schema. Do these five class categories in fact combine economic roles with similar degrees of economic power in the workplace? The PSLSD data does not allow us to do this, but a more recent data-set could be used for this purpose. The Labour Force Surveys (LFSs) conducted since 2000 by the official statistics agency, Statistics South Africa, collect much more detailed data on work, including both occupations and self-employment. The data for employees covers the permanency of employment, the ownership of tools used, whether the contract is written or not, whether the work is supervised and whether payments are made to pension or retirement funds. Use of this data would allow both the testing of the internal validity of the crude PSLSD-based class categories (assuming that these could be recreated from the LFS data) and, if necessary, the development of more finely-tuned class categories. Further research is clearly warranted using the LFS data. Unfortunately, however, the LFSs collect little data other than on work, so they are of little value in examining whether class 'counts', i.e. has external or construct validity.

*Table 3. PSLSD-based, reduced occupational categories*

| *Occupational classification* | *Percent* |
|---|---|
| UC: Upper class | 11 |
| SPC: Semi-professional class | 7 |
| IC: Intermediate class | 29 |
| CWC: Core working class | 31 |
| MWC: Marginal working class | 21 |
| Total | 100 |

Using these categories, we allocate an individual occupational classification to every individual in regular or casual employment in the PSLSD survey. A small number of people, it turns out, have two jobs, and even two different occupational

classifications. For example, the PSLSD sample includes the case of a young woman living in Pretoria, who has a full-time job working for the government in a professional occupation but also works as a sports instructress for one hour a day. In cases like this the individual was classified according to the 'highest' class for which their jobs make them 'eligible'. The distribution of working people in the PSLSD survey between these categories is presented in Table 3.

Excluding workers in agriculture and domestic services allows us to compare the PSLSD data with Crankshaw's data. There remain important differences: most obviously between occupational classifications, but also in that Crankshaw includes *some* domestic workers (if they are employed by companies rather than private households). The comparison is presented in Table 4.

*Table 4. PSLSD-based and Crankshaw's occupational categories compared*

| *Classification* | *Crankshaw (%)* | *PSLSD Total employment (%)* |
|---|---|---|
| Upper class | 7 | 14 |
| Semi-professional class | 12 | 9 |
| Intermediate class | 33 | 37 |
| Working class | 48 | 40* |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

* The MWC is excluded from the PSLSD data in this table.

It is difficult to judge the significance of the differences in the Crankshaw and PSLSD data recorded in Table 4. The PSLSD classifies a higher proportion of employed individuals as upper class, a smaller proportion as semi-professional, a slightly higher proportion as intermediate, and fewer people as working class (i.e. core working class). Part of the last of these differences is presumably due to the inclusion in Crankshaw's data of workers in the domestic sector who are employed by firms (as opposed to private households) – i.e. people excluded from the PSLSD (core) working class category in Table 4. Crankshaw's occupational categories are, of course, constructed with greater care than the PSLSD – but categorisation is only as good as the data and, especially, the sample used.

Before we can turn to the problem of moving from individual occupational classifications to household class classifications, we have to make sure that each individual has only one individual occupational classification. For the small number of people with two or more jobs, the highest classification of any of the jobs is taken as the overall individual classification. Thus, an office worker (intermediate class) who has a part-time job as a teacher (semi-professional class) is categorised as, overall, a semi-professional. A part-time farmworker who also

works part-time as a construction worker on a road-building project would be classified as core working-class. In a very small number of cases, the overall classification is counter-intuitive, but these are too few to make any significant difference to the overall results.

This last example raises questions about our delineation between core and marginal working class. Trade unions and social scientists alike have increasingly emphasised the growing distinctions between sections of the labour force according to the degree of protection provided by labour legislation and the opportunities for collective organisation through trade unions. The working class is said to be undergoing 'resegmentation' (Kenny & Webster, 1998). The more marginal sections of the working class include not only farm and domestic workers, but also many casual workers as well as employees in some small firms, especially in sectors such as construction. Optimally, we would use a more nuanced set of criteria for distinguishing between the core and marginal working class categories (CWC and MWC). These criteria might include other measures of precariousness in the labour market, such as some forms of casual employment. Separating out farm- and domestic workers only is a manageable, rather than the optimal, way of drawing distinctions.

## Classifying Households in Terms of Individual Occupational Classifications

Having given every individual in employment an occupational classification, we can begin to categorise the households of which they are members. The methodology for classification involves three stages. Firstly, households with only one person in regular or casual employment are classified according to the individual class position of that person. Thus, a household that includes a lawyer is classified as upper class, and one that includes a construction worker as working class. A total of 3704 households – out of a total of 8 848 in the sample, comprising 42 percent – were in this position. Secondly, households with more than one person in regular or casual employment, but where all of the working people have the same individual class position, are classified according to that uniform position. A total of 979 households, or 11 percent of the sample, were in this position. Some of these households had as many as six members with the same individual occupational classification. Finally, the remaining households – which had more than one working member each, but where the working members had different individual occupational classifications – were classified according to the highest individual occupational classification of their members. Thus a household composed of a domestic worker and a semi-skilled factory worker was classified as core working class, and one that comprised the managing director of a firm (upper class) and a secretary (intermediate) was classified as upper class. A total of 13 percent of the entire sample were cross-class households in terms of employment.

The actual figures for the classification of households in the PSLSD sample during each of these three stages are presented in Table 5 below. Disproportionately, many of the households categorised in the first two stages are in the lower class categories; disproportionately, many of the cross-class households are in the higher class categories.

*Table 5. Occupational categorisation of households*

| *Classification* | *1-worker house-holds* | *Single class multi-worker households* | *Cross-class multi-worker households* | *Total in class* | *Total in each class as % of total sample* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Upper class | 311 | 133 | 347 | 791 | 9 |
| Semi-professional class | 232 | 71 | 158 | 461 | 5 |
| Intermediate class | 1 014 | 262 | 449 | 1 725 | 20 |
| Core working class | 1 325 | 263 | 165 | 1 753 | 20 |
| Marginal working class | 822 | 250 | 0 | 1 072 | 12 |
| Total (in five classes) | 3 704 | 979 | 1 119 | 5 802 | 67 |

The methodology used here reduces cross-class households (in terms of employment) to a single household classification. The range of individual membership of cross-class households according to individual occupational classification is indicated in Table 6. In this table, each row shows the occupational classifications of the individuals in households, with the household classification shown on the left.

*Table 6. Household and individual classifications compared*

| *Household class* | *Individual occupational classification* | | | | | *Total* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *UC* | *SPC* | *IC* | *CWC* | *MWC* | |
| UC | 942 | 74 | 246 | 87 | 11 | 1 360 |
| SPC | 0 | 540 | 108 | 69 | 13 | 730 |
| IC | 0 | 0 | 2 093 | 378 | 184 | 2 655 |
| CWC | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 087 | 191 | 2 278 |
| MWC | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 390 | 1 390 |
| Total | 942 | 614 | 2 447 | 2 621 | 1 789 | 8 413 |

Table 6 shows, for example, that households classified as upper class included 942 people with upper class individual occupational classifications, 74 with semi-professional individual occupational classifications, 246 with intermediate individual occupational classifications, and so on. Most cross-class households span a narrow range of individual occupational classifications: especially upper class and intermediate class, and intermediate class and core working class. There are very few surprising combinations (such as upper class and marginal working class).

Another shortcut in the methodology needs to be acknowledged. In allocating a class position to individuals and households, no distinction is made between permanent and casual employment. Thus, an individual with both a permanent and a casual job is categorised according to the 'higher' classification of either job. More importantly, a multi-class household is categorised according to the 'higher' classification of any of its members, even if that member has a casual job only whilst other members, in 'lower' class categories, have permanent jobs. Whilst this shortcut is unlikely to make much difference, a more nuanced class categorisation might make allowance for such multi-class positions.

## Classifying Households without Any Members in Employment

The classification of households in terms of the occupations of their members leaves 33 percent of households unclassified – and unclassifiable according to straightforward occupational categories. The next step is therefore to classify these households without working members. Unfortunately, there is no obviously correct way of doing this. Below we shall use three different methodologies for classifying these remaining households: (1) according to whether or not they include unemployed people or not, (2) according to whether or not they receive income from assets or entrepreneurial activity, and (3) according to whether or not they receive incomes from remittances, pensions, both or neither of these.

Let us consider first the presence of unemployed people. Here we shall use an expanded definition of unemployment. Whereas a narrow definition of unemployment includes only those jobless people who are actively looking for work, the expanded definition also includes the 'discouraged' unemployed, i.e. jobless people who are not actively looking for work because, they say, there are no jobs available (see further Nattrass, 2000). On this basis, the unclassified households can be divided between households with unemployed members, labelled the 'NESU' or 'no employed/some unemployed class', and those without, labelled 'other'. The residual 'other' class comprises households without any wage earners or unemployed people, but includes households with only self-employed people or people who do not participate in the labour force (such as full-time students, pensioners, people looking after children and the home, and the disabled or sick). The NESU class includes almost 15 percent of the households in the PSLSD sample, whilst the other class includes almost 19 percent of them.

## Household Classifications and Household Incomes

Having classified every household, we can now turn to see how the class structure is reflected in material terms, and how it fits into the picture of income distribution. Table 7 shows the mean household income of households in each of the seven classes we have identified, together with the proportion of households in that class and the share of total income earned by that class as a whole. There is very clearly a relationship between class (as we have defined it) and household income. Mean household incomes in the top class are more than eight times the mean household income in the marginal working class, and thirteen times the mean household income of the unemployed class. Put another way, the upper class comprises 9 percent of the households, but 30 percent of the total income, whereas the marginal working class comprises 12 percent of the households but only 5 percent of total income. Households in the NESU class (i.e. households with no employed but some unemployed members) comprise 15 percent of the total sample, but just 4 percent of total household income.

Part of this difference is due to the different number of household members in employment. Only 39 percent of upper class households had just one member in employment; the equivalent proportion for intermediate class households was 59 percent, for core working class households 76 percent, and marginal working class households 77 percent. The effects of higher individual incomes are thus compounded as upper class households have multiple incomes from employment. The average upper class household had 1,3 times as many members in employment as core working class households.

*Table 7. Household incomes in different classes*

| *Class* | *Mean household income (R/month, 1993)* | *Median household income (R/month, 1993)* | *Households in class as a % of all households* | *Income of households in class as a % of income of all households* | *Average household size* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| UC | 6 573 | 5 542 | 9 | 30 | 3,7 |
| SPC | 3 601 | 2 838 | 5 | 10 | 5,0 |
| IC | 2 493 | 1 748 | 20 | 25 | 4,5 |
| CWC | 1 335 | 1 057 | 20 | 14 | 4,6 |
| MWC | 795 | 532 | 12 | 5 | 4,3 |
| NESU | 513 | 367 | 15 | 4 | 5,8 |
| Other | 1 366 | 450 | 19 | 13 | 4,1 |
| Total | 1 957 | 907 | 100 | 100 | 4,6 |

There is not much of a relationship between class and household size. The upper class has the smallest average household size, at 3,7 members. The NESU class has the highest average, at 5,8 members. The averages for the other classes all fall in between, in no apparent order. The core and marginal working classes have an average household size of 4,6 and 4,3 members respectively (although both are pulled down by the inclusion of single-member 'households' comprising migrant workers living in hostels). The semi-professional class has an average household size above the overall mean, and the intermediate class an average household size just below the mean. The small size of upper class households and the large size of NESU households mean that the average per capita household incomes of the different classes vary by more than the average household income.

A striking feature of Table 7 is the high average income of households remaining in the 'other' category. These households include some very rich households, with high incomes from self-employment, financial assets, rent or agricultural production – as we shall see further below. The class also includes very poor households, dependent on pensions or remittances or without any income whatsoever. It is clearly a problem to combine these disparate households into one category. It is revealing that the median household income in this residual category is very low, barely more than the NESU class, despite the high mean household income. This shows that there are many very poor households and a few very rich households in this category.

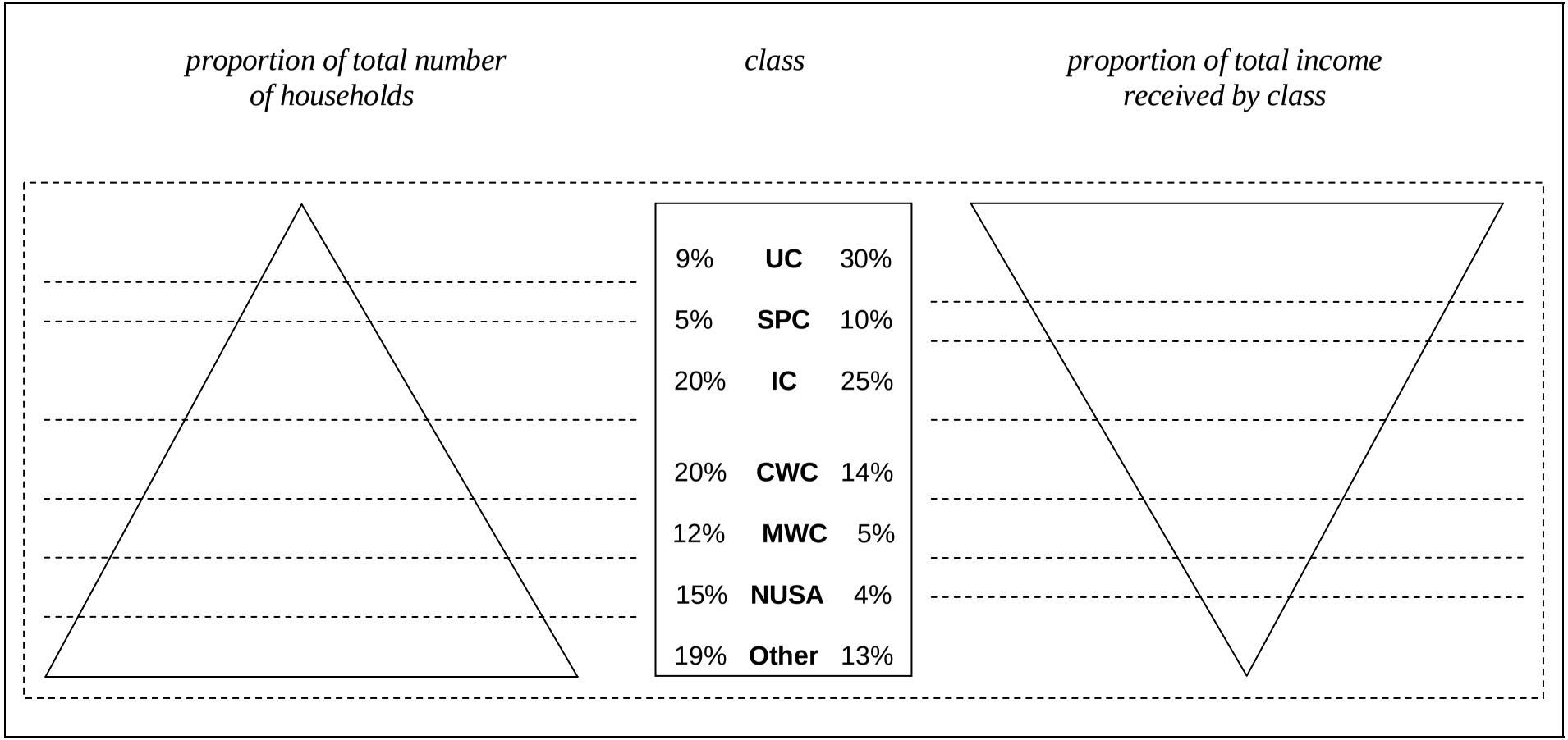
If we compare the average household incomes above with the overall mean (average) and median, we can see several interesting results. The mean household income, according to the PSLSD data, was about R1960 per month, and the median

household income was just over R900 per month. (These are in 1993 prices; between 1993 and 2003 prices doubled, so that the 1993 mean and median household incomes in 2003 prices would be approximately R4000 and R1800 per month). The average income of households in the upper class, semi-professional class and intermediate classes are above both the mean and median incomes for society as a whole. The average income for households in the core working class is below the mean but above the median. Only in the marginal working class and the NESU class is the average household income below the median as well as the mean. Households in the core working class are *not* privileged, in that they have average incomes below the mean for society as a whole, but are privileged in that their incomes are nonetheless above the median.

## Mapping the Social Structure

Using Table 7 we can draw two 'maps' of the social structure, one separating out the classes according to their share of the total number of households and the other according to their share of the total income. The pyramid shape of the first map in Figure 1 contrasts visually with the upturned pyramid of the second map. Figure 1 illustrates the point that the largest classes in post-apartheid South Africa – defined according to the methodology used here, using the PSLSD data, and measuring size in terms of numbers of households – are the intermediate class, the core working class and the residual, 'other' category. There are also substantial numbers of households in the NESU and marginal working classes. But the income shares of these classes are very different to the distribution of households. The largest income shares are those of the upper class and intermediate class.

*Figure 1. Shares of Households and Income of Classes, 1993*



The results shown in Table 7 can be also be used to map the social structure in terms of how classes related to patterns of income distribution. Tables 8 and 9 show the relationship between class and income deciles (each decile comprising one-tenth of the total number of households, ordered according to household income). Table 8 shows how each class is distributed in terms of income deciles, whilst Table 9 shows the composition of each income decile in terms of classes.

*Table 8. Class, by income decile*

| *Income Decile* | *Household class* | | | | | | | *Total %* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *UC %* | *SPC %* | *IC %* | *CWC %* | *MWC %* | *NESU %* | *Other %* | |
| 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 10 | 32 | 19 | 10 |
| 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 19 | 20 | 19 | 10 |
| 3 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 7 | 18 | 16 | 18 | 10 |
| 4 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 13 | 17 | 12 | 13 | 10 |
| 5 | 1 | 1 | 7 | 15 | 17 | 8 | 11 | 10 |
| 6 | 2 | 4 | 13 | 19 | 11 | 7 | 6 | 10 |
| 7 | 5 | 13 | 17 | 18 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 10 |
| 8 | 7 | 24 | 21 | 14 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 10 |
| 9 | 25 | 34 | 19 | 7 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 10 |
| 10 | 59 | 24 | 12 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 10 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

The upper class is concentrated in the top two deciles, with over half (59 percent) of its members in the top decile alone. Almost all (82 percent) semi-professional households are in the top three deciles. Intermediate class households are more evenly distributed, but with most in deciles 7 to 9. The working class is spread out between deciles 4 and 8, with the largest proportions in deciles 6 and 7. Most (or 71 percent of) farm-worker and domestic worker households are in deciles 2 to 5.

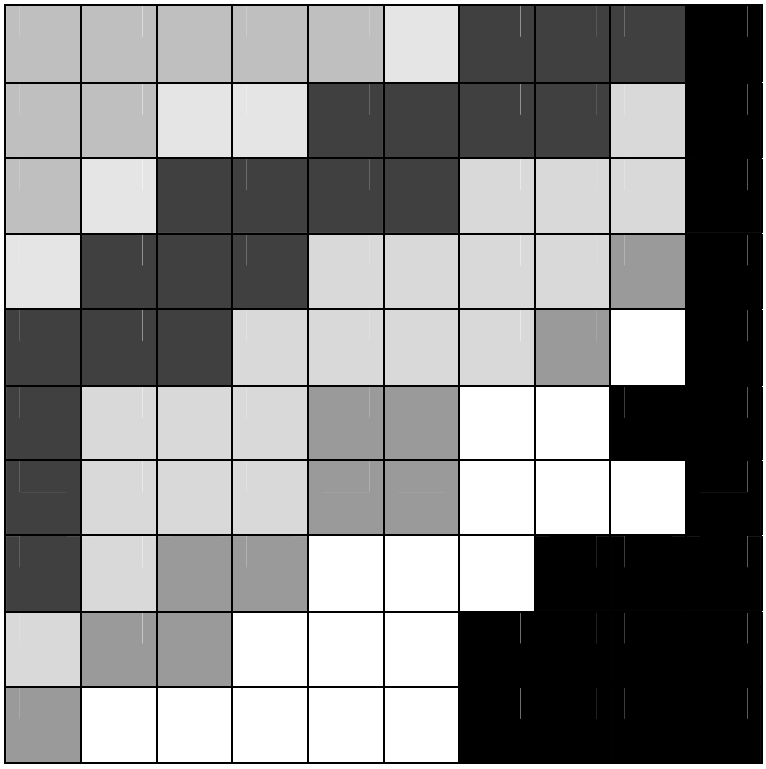
*Table 9. Income decile, by class*

| *House-hold class* | *Income decile* | | | | | | | | | | *Total %* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *1%* | *2%* | *3%* | *4%* | *5%* | *6%* | *7%* | *8%* | *9%* | *10%* | |
| UC | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 7 | 22 | 52 | 9 |
| SPC | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 7 | 12 | 18 | 12 | 5 |
| IC | 1 | 4 | 5 | 10 | 14 | 25 | 34 | 42 | 38 | 24 | 20 |
| CWC | 3 | 7 | 14 | 26 | 30 | 37 | 36 | 28 | 15 | 4 | 20 |
| MWC | 13 | 23 | 23 | 21 | 21 | 13 | 6 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 12 |
| NESU | 47 | 30 | 24 | 18 | 13 | 10 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 15 |
| Other | 36 | 36 | 34 | 5 | 21 | 11 | 9 | 7 | 6 | 8 | 19 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

The bottom three deciles consist mostly of households without any employed members; the only employed members are generally in farm or domestic work (i.e. are in the marginal working class). The core working class constitute between 25 percent and 37 percent of each of deciles 4 to 8. Deciles 7 to 9 are dominated by intermediate class households, and decile 10 by upper class households.

We can now map the social structure according to income deciles. Figure 2 shows that the social structure does not map onto income categories as clear strata, but rather that there is some 'overlap' between classes. Some intermediate class households have higher incomes than some upper class households, many core working class households have higher incomes than some intermediate class households, and so on. But these maps do show some pattern. The upper class and semi-professional households are, in income terms, the most advantaged classes in society. Intermediate class households are, in general, located below them in income terms, and core working class households are, in general, lower still. None of these classes, however, includes very many households in the poorer half of the population. The poorer half of the population comprises households in the marginal working class, the NESU class, and the residual 'other' category.

*Figure 2. Distribution of Classes across Income Deciles*



| |
|---|
| Decile 10 (richest) |
| Decile 9 |
| Decile 8 |
| Decile 7 |
| Decile 6 |
| Decile 5 |
| Decile 4 |
| Decile 3 |
| Decile 2 |
| Decile 1(poorest) |

| | |
|---|---|
| | upper class |
| | semi-professional class |
| | intermediate class |
| | core working class |
| | marginal working class |
| | NESU class |
| | other |

Note: Each square corresponds to one percent of society, with each row (or income decile) comprising ten squares. Thus the upper class comprises approximately half (5/10) of the top decile, one-fifth (2/10) of decile 9 and 1/10 of decile 8, making total of about 8 percent of society.

## A Second Way of Classifying Households without Members in Employment

Classifying households without members in employment according to whether they include unemployed people (as opposed to just jobless people who are not available for employment and thus not in the economically active population, i.e. children, retired people, etc) overlooks the role of remittances in society. A significant proportion of households without members in employment is supported

financially by other households through remittances. Households that are dependent on remittances might be thought of as part of the same classes as the households that send money to them.

The PSLSD survey provides data on which households receive remittances and which households send them, but there is no way of matching one up with the other. What we can do is identify which households in the NESU or 'other' categories above receive remittances, and define them as a separate class. Given, however, that the PSLSD data shows that almost 60 percent of total remittances are sent by households classified as core working class or intermediate class, we can probably assume that *most* households that receive remittances and are thus in this newly-identified class, receive them from the intermediate and core working classes. (The PSLSD evidence on remittances is examined further in the accompanying working paper (Seekings, 2003), with respect to whether the unemployed comprise an 'underclass' in South Africa).

A second factor which we might want to take into account is that many households are dependent on the old-age pension received by men (over the age of sixty-five) and women (over the age of sixty). Most retired people in the 1990s spent most of their lives working – i.e. they spent most of their lives in an era when unemployment was low. We might think of pensioners as retired members of the occupational classes identified above. Unfortunately, we have no way of telling what occupations pensioners were in prior to their retirement. We can be confident that they were not in the upper class or semi-professional grouping, since they would then probably have access to private pension schemes and be ineligible for the government old-age pension. It is also unlikely that many were in intermediate occupations, since the intermediate class has grown relatively recently, and generally required qualifications that most old people did not have. It is therefore likely that most pensioners are former members of the core or marginal working classes (or were the dependants of people who were in those classes).

Taking these factors into account, we can reclassify the unemployed and 'other' households above into four different categories: households receiving remittances, households receiving old-age pensions, households receiving both remittances and old-age pensions, and households receiving neither remittances nor old-age pensions. Table 10 provides data on the size, incomes and income shares of the classes defined using these classifications. Among the households without any employed members, the mean and median incomes of households that receive pensions but not remittances are higher than the incomes of those that receive remittances but not pensions.

The final column gives the average household size for each class, including resident household members. The PSLSD survey also asked about non-resident 'members' of the household, most of whom were migrant workers. If these non-residents are included, then the average household size of the first five classes changes little. The average size of the class that has no employed members but receives remittances rises from 4,7 to 5,9, whilst the average size of the class that has no employed members but receives remittances and pensions rises from 5,7 to 7,1. These figures show the importance of migrant workers, remitting part of their wages, to such households.

In Table 10 it is striking that the mean household income in the residual 'other' category is high (above the mean for society as a whole). This is because this residual category includes two very different kinds of household: those with almost no income whatsoever (34 percent of the households in this category are in the bottom income decile), and households with income from self-employment, rent, financial assets and so on (which result in about 20 percent of the households in this category falling into the top four income deciles). The incomes of households receiving remittances and pensions are much lower, as we would expect.

*Table 10. Households according to revised classifications*

| *Class* | *Mean household income (R/month)* | *Median household income (R/month)* | *Households in class as a % of all households* | *Income of households in class as a % of income of all households* | *Average house-hold size* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| UC | 6 573 | 5 542 | 9 | 30 | 3,7 |
| SPC | 3 601 | 2 838 | 5 | 10 | 5,0 |
| IC | 2 493 | 1 748 | 20 | 25 | 4,7 |
| CWC | 1 335 | 1 057 | 20 | 14 | 4,6 |
| MWC | 795 | 532 | 12 | 5 | 4,3 |
| *No employed, but receiving:* | | | | | |
| Remittances | 464 | 258 | 12 | 3 | 4,7 |
| Pensions | 682 | 480 | 8 | 3 | 4,9 |
| Remittances & pensions | 757 | 633 | 6 | 2 | 5,7 |
| Other* | 2342 | 300 | 8 | 9 | 4,2 |
| Total | 1 957 | 907 | 100 | 100 | 4,6 |

*Other includes households with neither (a) any employed members nor (b) any income from remittances or pensions.

# 3. Mapping Class: Property and Business

The implementation of this approach has entailed a series of methodological shortcuts and theoretical assumptions that warrant critical comment. Some of these reflect the limits of the dataset: for example, it was not possible to separate out domestic workers employed by private households (who should be in the marginal working class) from cleaning staff employed by firms, government departments, universities, schools and so on (who should be included in the core working class). Others concern the procedures used for classifying households. Most importantly, all members of a cross-class household were classified as being in the same class, since the household was used as the unit of analysis; and each household was classified according to the 'highest' individual occupational classification of any of its members – regardless of whether that person was in regular or casual employment, the primary breadwinner or not, or the head of the household or not. No account was taken of distribution within the household: we know in practice that income is often not shared equally in a household and, in socio-political terms, a dependant, unemployed or otherwise jobless person is rarely in a position equal to that of the household's primary breadwinner. There are many sociological issues which we might want to explore for which we would need to disaggregate the household – in terms of sex, age, employment, or whatever.

Another set of concerns is related to the privileging of employment in this approach. No account has been taken of self-employment or activities other than employment, nor has any account been taken of the significance in monetary terms of employment relative to other sources. While we know that household incomes in South Africa are dominated by wages and wage-related income – which constitute a total of about 68 percent of the total income in the country – there may be a significant number of households with members in employment whose household income comes not from wages primarily, but from other sources. For example, a rich household might receive more 'unearned' income (i.e. from financial investments, rents, profits) than income from salaries or wages, and a poor household might receive more from government old-age pensions than from the casual or even regular employment of its members. There is no unique, right way of classifying households and mapping the social structure, so we should consider what differences would result if we used different approaches.

Let us consider those households that earn income from wealth or from entrepreneurial activity. Such households include small and large businessmen, land and property owners, farmers, and owners of financial assets that generate a return. As many as 45 percent of South African households earn *some* income from these activities. Optimally, we would classify these by some criteria independent of income – such as whether or not they employ other people, or whether or not they

themselves work – but this is impossible with the data from the PSLSD survey. What we can do is categorise households according to the level of income earned from wealth or entrepreneurship, guessing that income is a crude proxy for the preferred criteria. To be more explicit, we might guess that the high income entrepreneurs or property-owners tend to employ other people, but do not work fully themselves, whilst middle income entrepreneurs or property-owners tend to employ others and work themselves, whilst the low-income entrepreneurs tend to work themselves, but not employ anyone else.

The PSLSD data indicates that over half of the households with income from entrepreneurship or wealth – or 26 percent of all households – earn less than the value of an old-age pension from these activities. This sum is tiny, and is too small to warrant any modification of the classificatory scheme; thus, for example, households classified as core working class by occupation would remain classified as such, whilst hitherto unclassified households would remain unclassified. One quarter of the households with some income from assets or entrepreneurship (comprising 11 percent of all households) earn more than the value of a pension, but less than five times the value of a pension. As this represents significant (even if not massive) earnings, the household classification must take it into account. The choice of five times the value of a pension is not entirely arbitrary, as it corresponds almost exactly to the mean household income in South Africa. A small number of households – 7 percent of the total in South Africa – earn more than five times the value of a pension from wealth or entrepreneurial activity. Over half of these earn more than ten times the value of a pension, i.e. over R3 900 per month in 1993, which is a very substantial amount.

The household classification is modified, taking these earnings into account, as follows: all households (excepting those in the upper class already) with earnings from wealth and entrepreneurial activity higher than ten times the value of an old-pension are classified as ‘WE1’ (where WE stands for wealth/entrepreneurship). Households (excepting those in the upper class already) with earnings from these sources more than five times but less than ten times the value of a pension are classified as ‘WE2’. Households in the core and marginal working classes and the unclassified categories which have earnings above the value of a pension – but less than the five times this value – are classified as ‘WE3’. Of the households reclassified according to wealth and entrepreneurial activity, almost two-thirds come from the previously unclassified residual category, with about one-sixth from the semi-professional and intermediate classes (to WE1 and WE2) and one-sixth from the core and marginal working classes (mostly to WE3).

The above classification of households is based on two criteria: the occupation of household members in employment and the level of household earnings from

wealth or entrepreneurial activity. The residual, unclassified category therefore consists of households with no members in employment and negligible earnings from wealth or entrepreneurship. Most of these households are dependent on remittances or old-age pensions. This residual category could be divided according to whether or not the households included unemployed members or not, or according to the sources of household income. For simplicity, they are simply left as an undifferentiated 'other' category in the tables that follow. In the accompanying working paper (Seekings, 2003), we disaggregate this category further.

The distribution of households between these nine classifications, based on occupation, wealth and entrepreneurship, is set out in Table 11. This approach allows us to see that important differences existed between the three 'WE' classes. Mean incomes among WE1 households are ten times the mean incomes of WE3 households. Put another way, the mean incomes of households in the WE1 and WE2 classes were above both the mean and median incomes for society as a whole, whilst the mean household income in the WE3 class was below the mean but above the median. These differences were even bigger if one takes household size into account, as the WE1 and WE2 classes were smaller than average, while the WE3 households were larger than average.

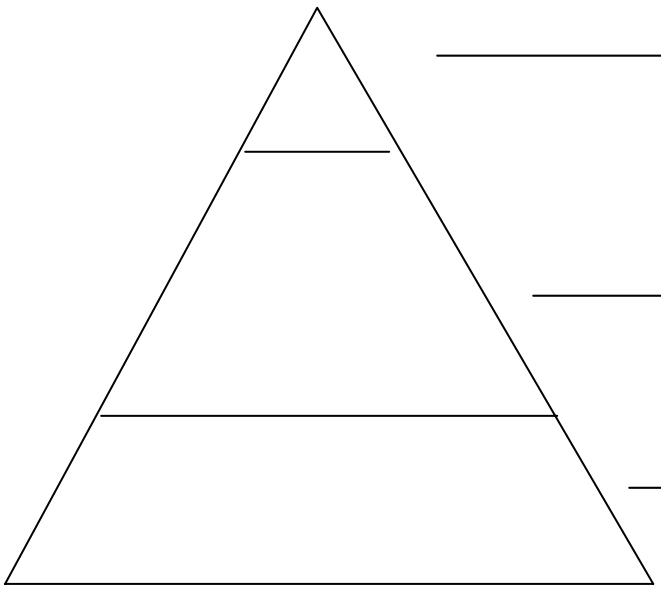
*Table 11. Household incomes in third classificatory system*

| *Class* | *Mean household income (R/month)* | *Median household income (R/month)* | *Households in class as a % of all households* | *Income of households in class as a % of income of all households* | *Average house-hold size* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| WE1 | 15 732 | 8 520 | 1 | 11 | 4,5 |
| UC | 6 573 | 5 542 | 9 | 30 | 3,8 |
| WE2 | 4 665 | 3 755 | 2 | 4 | 4,1 |
| SPC | 3 264 | 2 735 | 5 | 8 | 5,3 |
| IC | 2 257 | 1 700 | 19 | 22 | 4,7 |
| WE3 | 1 442 | 1 115 | 5 | 4 | 5,7 |
| CWC | 1 187 | 1 008 | 19 | 11 | 4,7 |
| MWC | 618 | 518 | 12 | 4 | 4,5 |
| Other | 413 | 363 | 29 | 6 | 5,8 |
| Total | 1 957 | 907 | 100 | 100 | 5,0 |

If society is looked at in this way, then there is a clearer relationship between class and household income. Mean household incomes in the WE1 class were twenty-five times the mean household income in the marginal working class (MWC), and

nearly forty times the mean household income of the residual 'other' class. The two top classes between them comprised 10 percent of the households, but 41 percent of the total income, whereas the bottom two classes comprised 41 percent of all households but only 10 percent of total income. Figure 3 'maps' the class structure of South Africa using this schema, grouping classes together to illustrate the essentially three-part character of the class structure.

*Figure 3. Class Map of South Africa, 1993*



| | % of house-holds | % of inc-ome |
|---|---|---|
| Upper class (incl. WE1 and WE2) | 12 | 45 |
| Semi-prof. class ) Intermediate class ) Core working class ) Petty traders ) (WE3) ) | 48 | 45 |
| Marginal working ) Class ) Other ) | 41 | 10 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

*Table 12. Class, by income decile, for third classificatory system*

| *Income decile* | *Household class* | | | | | | | *Total %* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *UC+WE1/2 %* | *SPC %* | *IC %* | *WE3 %* | *CWC %* | *MWC %* | *Other %* | |
| 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 11 | 29 | 10 |
| 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 19 | 23 | 10 |
| 3 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 11 | 8 | 19 | 18 | 10 |
| 4 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 10 | 14 | 17 | 13 | 10 |
| 5 | 0 | 1 | 8 | 18 | 16 | 17 | 9 | 10 |
| 6 | 1 | 5 | 13 | 17 | 20 | 11 | 5 | 10 |
| 7 | 4 | 13 | 18 | 18 | 19 | 4 | 2 | 10 |
| 8 | 9 | 25 | 22 | 14 | 15 | 1 | 1 | 10 |
| 9 | 26 | 35 | 19 | 10 | 5 | 1 | 0 | 10 |
| 10 | 59 | 20 | 9 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 10 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

The results shown in Table 11 can be also be used to map the social structure in terms of the relationships between classes and the distribution of income, just as we have already used the results shown in Table 7. Tables 12 and 13 show the relationship between class and household income deciles. Table 12 shows how each class is distributed in terms of income deciles, whilst Table 13 shows the composition of each income decile in terms of classes. For simplification, WE1 and WE2 are combined with the occupationally-defined upper class (UC). These elite classes are concentrated in the top two deciles, with over half (59 percent) of their members in the top decile alone. Almost all (80 percent) semi-professional households are in the top three deciles. Intermediate class households are more evenly distributed, but with most (60 percent) in deciles 7 to 9. The core working class is spread out between deciles 4 and 8, with the largest proportions in deciles 6 and 7. Most (72 percent) marginal working class households are in deciles 2 to 5. Only the marginal working class and the 'other' category are mostly in the poorest half of the population.

*Table 13. Income decile, by class, for third classificatory scheme*

| *Class* | *Income decile* | | | | | | | | | | *Total* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *1%* | *2%* | *3%* | *4%* | *5%* | *6%* | *7%* | *8%* | *9%* | *10%* | *%* |
| WE1+ UC+ WE2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 11 | 31 | 70 | 12 |
| SPC | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 7 | 12 | 18 | 10 | 5 |
| IC | 1 | 4 | 5 | 10 | 14 | 25 | 34 | 42 | 36 | 17 | 19 |
| WE3 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 5 | 9 | 8 | 9 | 7 | 5 | 1 | 4 |
| CWC | 3 | 7 | 14 | 26 | 29 | 36 | 35 | 26 | 9 | 1 | 19 |
| MWC | 13 | 23 | 23 | 20 | 21 | 13 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 12 |
| TDC | 83 | 66 | 52 | 39 | 26 | 14 | 6 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 29 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

# A Note on the Primary Source of Income

The approach used to generate Tables 11 to 13 entailed the reclassification of some households that had been defined in occupational terms, on the basis that income from certain other sources was greater than income from wages. This line of thinking could be extended to classify all households according to their primary or largest source of income, rather than classifying them according to occupation regardless of the importance of wages to household income. Using this approach, however, leads to the reclassification of very few households – because of the overwhelming importance of wages. Of the households defined by occupation according to the first two approaches used above (see Tables 7 or 10), only 3 percent would be reclassifed as having government transfers (including the old-age pension) as their primary source of income and 2 percent would be reclassified with respect to remittances. The effects of such a reclassification on each class's mean household income, share of total income or distribution in terms of income deciles, are consistently negligible.

# Unemployment and the class structure

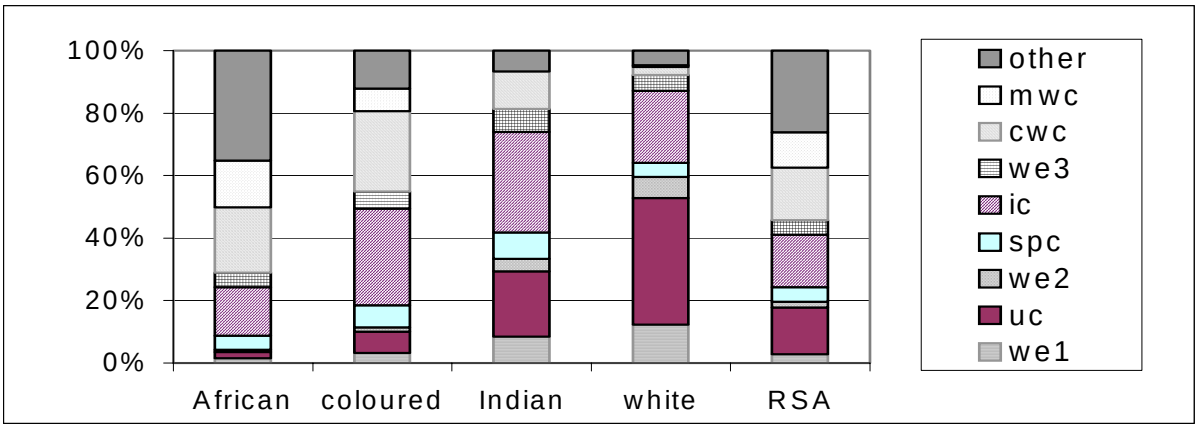
In South Africa, there is a strong relationship between inequality and unemployment. Almost two-thirds (62 percent) of the unemployed are in the poorest half of the population. This is in stark contrast with people in regular employment, less than one quarter of whom are in the poorest half (and these are predominantly farmworkers and, to a lesser extent, domestic workers, not members of the industrial working-class). Given the scale of unemployment and its close

relationship to income, it is clearly necessary to examine carefully how we map the class positions of the unemployed. In the analyses above, we have treated the unemployed in two ways: either (1) as members of households with mediated class locations according to the occupation of other household members or the source of household income (including especially income from business or assets), or (2) as a residual category. In the accompanying working paper (Seekings, 2003), we examine in detail whether we should identify all or some of the unemployed as a discrete class.

# 4. Race, Class and Geography

Using the class categories set out in Table 11, we can examine the relationship between race and class as well as the provincial and urban/rural distribution and composition of the different classes. Figure 4 shows the composition of each class in terms of race. The first three classes (WE1, UC and WE2) are predominantly white, with white households comprising between 55 and 70 percent of the total in each class. The semi-professional, intermediate and petty trader (WE3) classes are predominantly African, with African households comprising between 62 and 71 percent of the total in each. The core and marginal working classes and the residual 'other' class are overwhelmingly African. There is therefore a clear relationship between race and class, but the relationship is far less neat or exact than it was in the early apartheid period. White households do not hold a monopoly of membership in the more privileged classes.

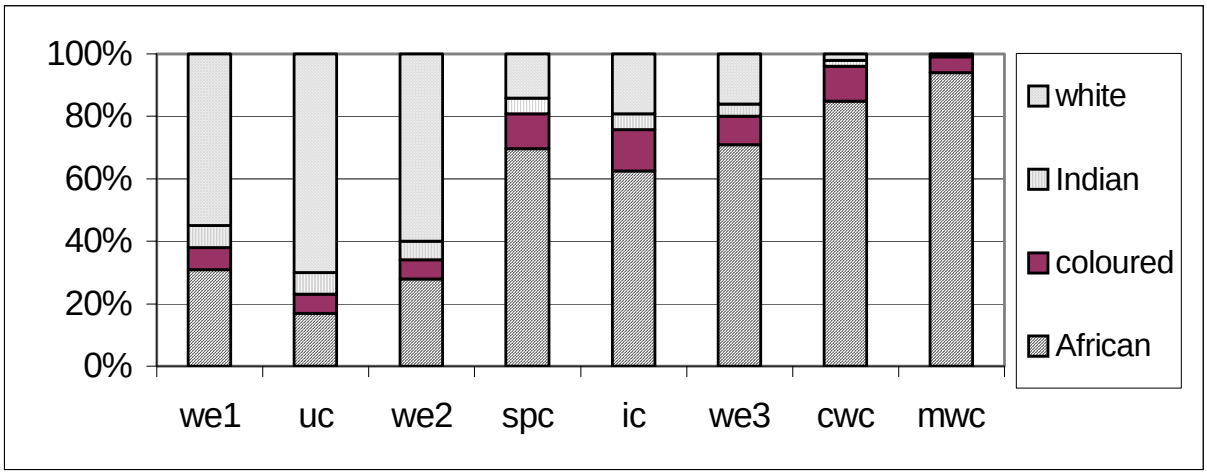
*Figure 4. Class, by race*




The relationship between race and class is further exposed in Figure 5, which shows the class composition of the different racial groups in South Africa. The proportion of African households in the first three classes is small (only about 10

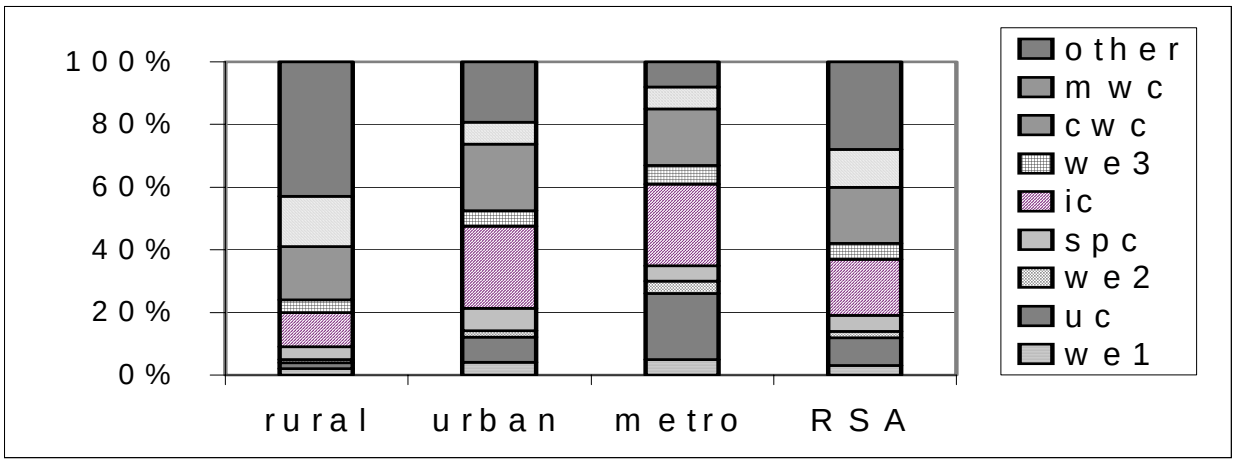
percent), while the proportion of white households in them is very large (at almost 60 percent). Conversely, the proportion of African households in the last three classes is very large (over 70 percent); the proportion of white households in these classes is small (less than 10 percent).

*Figure 5. Race, by class*




There is also a clear relationship between where people live and the classes they are in. Figure 6 shows the class composition of metropolitan, urban and rural areas respectively. It is not surprising that a majority of the marginal working class live in rural areas – as the category includes farmworkers and their dependants – but it is perhaps surprising that almost half of the core working class also lives in rural areas. The large number of teachers in rural areas means that almost half of the semi-professional class is also in rural areas.

*Figure 6. Rural/urban, by class*



The distribution of classes between provinces and the class composition of each of the provinces is much as one would expect, knowing that some provinces are predominantly metropolitan and others predominantly rural. WE1, UC and WE2 together comprise 23 percent of households in the Western Cape and 31 percent in Gauteng. But together they comprise only 6 percent of households in the Eastern Cape and the Northern Province. Looked at the other way round, 52 percent of the upper class was in Gauteng alone, with a further 12 percent in the Western Cape. About half of the WE1 and WE2 classes were in these two provinces. The semi-professional class is distributed more evenly across the provinces. The intermediate class, however, is also concentrated in provinces with a large metropolitan population. About one in four households in each of the Western Cape and Gauteng were in the intermediate class, and these two provinces accounted for 43 percent of the class in South Africa as a whole. The core working class was concentrated in Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, the Western Cape and Northwest Province (which between them accounted for 63 percent of the class). The largest concentrations of the marginal working class were in KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga. The residual, 'other' class was, unsurprisingly, concentrated in the Eastern Cape and Northern Province, with substantial numbers of households in KwaZulu-Natal as well. Between them, they accounted for about 70 percent of the class. In the Eastern Cape and Northern Province, more than 50 percent of households were in this 'other' class; the proportion in KwaZulu-Natal was quite a lot smaller, whilst in Gauteng and the Western Cape it was less than 10 percent.

# 5. The Significance of Class

At the outset we argued that the importance of class should not be derived from theory, but from observable relationship between class and other variables. Class is important, we suggested, if it is consequential. In this working paper we have sketched what the South African class structure might look like, depending on the assumptions made and methodology used. The paucity of data linking class to behavioural or attitudinal variables makes it impossible to demonstrate conclusively that any one approach to class is better than others, or indeed that class is more important than other factors (such as race or income). There are only a few relationships that can presently be examined with existing data. On the basis of this limited evidence, we suggest that there are strong relationships, but we do not have sufficient data to demonstrate that class is as important in South Africa as it is in, say, the USA (see Wright, 1997) or the UK (see Reid, 1998).

# Incomes and Living Standards

In the preceding empirical analysis of class in South Africa, we have already demonstrated the close relationship between class and household income. Using the final set of class categories, the WE1 class has a mean household income that is more than ten times higher than the mean household income in the core working class, more than twenty times higher than the mean household income in the marginal working class, and more than thirty times higher than the mean household income in the residual 'other' category (see Table 11). Both mean and median household incomes descend steadily as one moves from WE1 to the upper class, to WE2, to the semi-professional class, to the intermediate class, to WE3, to the core and then the marginal working classes, and finally to the residual 'other' class.

Given that household income determines – or is correlated with – many other variables concerning living conditions, it is unsurprising that there is also a close correlation between class and living conditions, and class and general levels of satisfaction. Table 14 presents data on selected variables for the different classes. Living conditions worsen from one class to another. Thus upper class households have an average of 6,3 rooms, and almost all have piped water and toilets inside the dwelling, whilst core working class households have an average of only 3,4 rooms, and only a minority have inside taps and toilet. The higher classes are generally satisfied with life; the lower classes are not.

*Table 14. Living conditions and satisfaction, by class*

| *Class* | *Living in a house or part of a house (%)* | *Average number of rooms in the dwelling* | *Has water piped inside the dwelling (%)* | *Has toilet inside the dwelling (%)* | *Is 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with life, overall (%)* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| WE1 | 78 | 6,3 | 73 | 73 | 62 |
| UC | 76 | 6,3 | 90 | 89 | 67 |
| WE2 | 80 | 6,2 | 81 | 81 | 67 |
| SPC | 76 | 5,2 | 52 | 51 | 40 |
| IC | 63 | 4,2 | 51 | 48 | 38 |
| WE3 | 58 | 4,8 | 42 | 41 | 35 |
| CWC | 44 | 3,4 | 31 | 32 | 29 |
| MWC | 48 | 2,9 | 23 | 14 | 25 |
| Other | 39 | 3,8 | 9 | 12 | 20 |
| Total | 53 | 4,1 | 37 | 36 | 34 |

## Class Mobility

The analysis in this paper so far has looked at class using the 'snapshot' picture of society provided by a one-off survey. But individuals' and households' class positions, like their incomes, can and do change over time. Mobility can take at least two forms. The first is mobility across the course of an individual's life, i.e. 'intra-generational mobility'. Individuals can change occupations and hence their direct class position, or change their mediated class position through marriage or otherwise moving into a new household. The second is mobility between generations, i.e. 'inter-generational mobility'.

The study of social and occupational mobility, i.e. how people change social positions and occupations, is a central element in class analysis. It is not difficult to see why mobility is important in social and political attitudes and behaviour. As Erikson and Goldthorpe write:

> 'Most obviously, the degree of permanence or impermanence with which individuals are associated with different positions [i.e. in the social structure], and the rates and patterns of movement among them, may be expected to condition both the formation of identities and the recognition of interests and, in turn, to determine where, and with what degree of sharpness, lines of cultural, social, and political, as well as economic division are drawn. At the same time, the nature and extent of mobility can be expected to influence the evaluations that individuals make of the social order under which they live and, in particular, concerning the legitimacy or otherwise of the inequalities of both opportunity and condition that it entails. In short, mobility rates and patterns may be seen as a persisting and pervasive factor shaping the ways in which the members of a society define themselves, and in turn the goals they pursue and the beliefs and values that they seek to uphold or contest' (1993: 2).

Mobility is so important that Goldthorpe views the class structure not as a set of static positions, but rather as a set of career-like trajectories through positions.

Almost no work has been done on mobility in South Africa. We know that the economy has transformed so fast that in many families, perhaps even most families, children are in very different occupations from their parents. It is not unusual for a young office-worker (in the intermediate class) to have a father who was a semi-skilled or skilled worker in manufacturing and/or a mother who was a domestic worker, and grand-parents who were farmworkers, unskilled migrant mineworkers (in the case of men), or who never had formal employment and never

left their homes in the reserves (in the case of women). But we have no quantitative data on this mobility.

This kind of mobility involves broad shifts over long periods of time. But, in South Africa, we know that there are also high rates of flux in individuals' labour market status and, hence, earnings, and thus household incomes over short periods of time. What are the implications of this for our analysis of class? It is certainly possible that individuals often shift position in the class structure. For example, a young man might go to school in a rural area and live with his grandparents in a household where no one works. He would thus start life in a household we have categorised as 'other'. He might then migrate to a town to look for work, perhaps living with one or both of his parents. Although unemployed himself, he would then have a mediated class position dependent on his working parents. If his father were a semi-skilled factory worker, for example, the young man would then be in the core working class. Suppose he finds employment as a security guard, and moves out of his parents' house into a shack with a girlfriend and perhaps children of his own. He would then be in the intermediate class. But if he were retrenched, and no one in his household was employed, he would drop back into the NESU (no employed, some unemployed) class. If his girlfriend earned some money brewing beer or hawking food, they might be in the WE3 class (or even the WE2 class, if she was very successful). If he spends much of his life oscillating between periods of employment and unemployment, he might be forever shifting between classes. Eventually, when he retires on a government old-age pension, he is likely to return to the 'other' class in which he started out decades earlier.

In societies where unemployment is low and there is little structural change in the economy, it is likely that individuals will shift positions infrequently and in the same general direction. In a society like South Africa, where unemployment is high, there are high rates of turnover in the labour market, household composition is very fluid and there have been major structural changes in the economy as a whole, many individuals will jump around from one class position to another and back again. Combining data for Kwazulu-Natal from the 1993 PSLSD and the follow-up 1998 KwaZulu-Natal Income Dynamics Study (KIDS) allows some analysis of employment and income dynamics (see Cichello *et al*., 2001), and might be used to examine class dynamics also, but analysis is limited by having data on two moments in time only. Other recent surveys ask more retrospective questions about employment history and parental occupations (e.g. the 2000 Khayelitsha/Mitchell's Plain Survey and the 2002 first wave of the Cape Area Panel Study), but these have yet to be analysed. The Labour Force Surveys use a rotating panel, and in principle should allow for analysis of short-term employment dynamics, but the panel rotates too fast to allow analysis of change beyond a couple of years, and the data-sets have not yet been released in forms amenable to

panel analysis. What is needed is a longer series of data using the same panel of respondents, with detailed questions on employment histories between surveys. Until we have that data, we cannot assess the extent of flux in individuals' positions within the class structure, let alone assess patterns in this flux. The Cape Area Panel Study promises to do this for a panel of younger respondents (aged, at the outset, between 14 and 22 years-old).

## The Reproduction of Inequality

The study of class mobility is important for another reason as well. In most societies, people from different class backgrounds face unequal opportunities in life. It is surely almost certain that the social background of individuals shapes their participation in the educational system, with clear effects on future earnings, and it is surely also plausible that social background has effects on labour market behaviour beyond those attributable to education alone.

Most of the work done on class mobility in the advanced industrialised societies examines how class backgrounds affect people's class positions in a situation where the overall class structure is changing slowly but steadily. The most important research on class mobility is that of Goldthorpe *et al* (1980), extending into Europe through the CASMIN (Comparative Analysis of Social Mobility in Industrial Nations) Project (see Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992). These studies calculate absolute and relative rates of mobility. Absolute rates are the rates at which individuals from particular class backgrounds are mobile into other classes; relative rates refer to mobility rates relative to the mobility rates of individuals from other classes. Thus, in societies where the manual working class has been shrinking and the intermediate classes have been growing, there might be a high absolute rate of mobility from manual working class origins to intermediate class destinations, but a low relative rate because individuals from manual working class backgrounds are still much less likely to end up in the intermediate class than are individuals from intermediate class backgrounds. Relative mobility rates make allowance for changes in the overall social or occupational structure.

Goldthorpe *et al* found that, overall, there has been trendless fluctuation in absolute rates, but considerable stability in relative rates. Cross-national variations were primarily due to the historical phasing of economic development. In the UK, the growth of the service class meant changing levels of absolute mobility, but little change in relative mobility: 'More "room at the top" has not been accompanied by greater equality in the opportunities to get there', as Marshall puts it (1997b: 5). Erikson and Goldthorpe (1992) examined three cases of late industrialisation (Poland, Ireland and Hungary), where a majority of the labour force was engaged in agriculture until the mid-twentieth century (as late as perhaps 1960 in Poland);

in Ireland and Poland, the decline of agricultural employment (through the break-up of peasant agriculture) meant a sharp, more-or-less once-off increase in absolute mobility. Similar work on Brazil has shown that there have been high rates of absolute mobility, with little change over time, whilst relative mobility rates rose over time – in contrast to the general pattern observed by Erikson and Goldthorpe (Costa-Ribeiro and Scalon, 2001).

Unfortunately, we have almost no data on absolute and relative mobility rates in South Africa. We know that public policy during the apartheid period not only stunted processes of class formation among the African population as a whole (through racial discrimination), but also shaped the patterns of differentiation (and perhaps stratification) that did emerge within the African population. Both 'revisionist' and 'liberal' writers (for examples, Hindson, 1987, and Wilson, 1975) emphasised the segmentation of labour markets between urban 'insiders' (with Section 10 residential rights) and migrant workers (without those rights). Schneier, using surveys among small samples of African workers in 1981, suggested that there were different inter- and intra-generational mobility rates among different sections of the African 'working-class'. Urban 'insiders' and their children were in a better position to take advantage of the new opportunities opening up as a result of structural change in the economy and the erosion (or circumvention) of legal constraints (Schneier, 1983). It is likely that the social and economic changes in the apartheid period resulted in sharp but perhaps once-off increases in absolute mobility (as in Ireland and Poland), but steady rates of relative mobility. In other words, opportunities may have expanded for all, but remained unequal in more-or-less steady patterns. Further research is clearly needed into this.

Further research should also help in more economistic enquiries. Analysis of class backgrounds might help to explain some of the variance we find in occupations and earnings that cannot be explained in terms of education or experience. It might well be the case that people with identical educational qualifications have different prospects in the labour market today because of the different information, attitudes and networks that they inherited or acquired through their contrasting social backgrounds. The children of migrant workers might be at a permanent disadvantage relative to the children of urban insiders. Such inter-generational effects will not be visible if studies simply use racial categories. Indeed, studies that fail to take into account the inherited effects of class can all too easily attribute to 'race' differences in earnings that are really rooted in class. For example, Adler and O'Sullivan (1996) suggest that there remains a large element of racial discrimination in earnings, because the difference between average earnings for African and white workers cannot be explained in terms of education and experience alone. But it might well be the case that the average earnings of African workers are an average of different classes, that the unexplained differences in

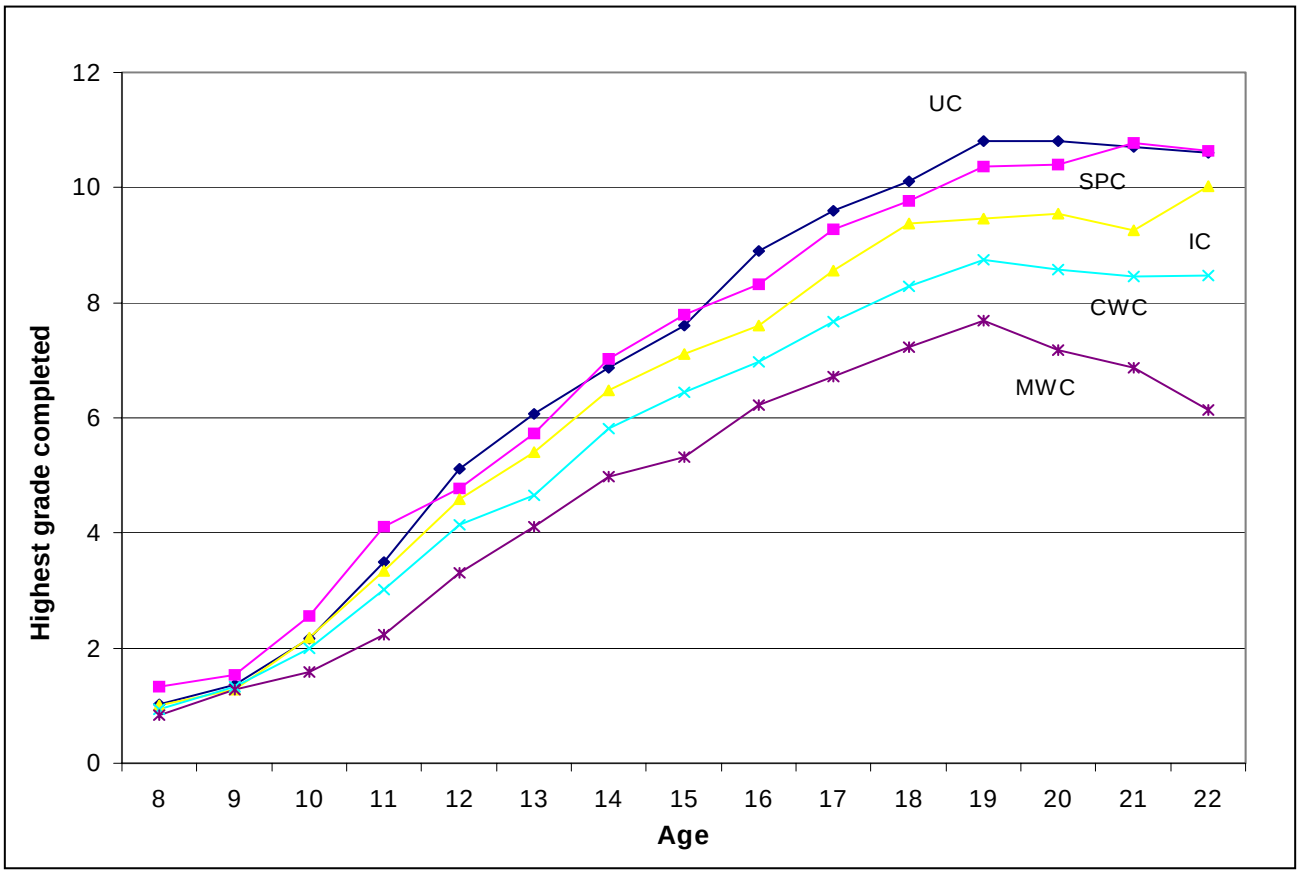
earnings occur between these classes, and the 'unexplained' difference thus reflects not racial discrimination as much as class privilege.

The growth of a well-paid African 'middle-class' in the 1990s (Whiteford and van Seventer, 2000) makes it all the more important to understand inter-generational factors that might affect the chances of 'making it' in the new South Africa.

## Education and the Reproduction of the Class Structure

The PSLSD data does provide some powerful evidence that inequality is reproduced along class lines. Figure 7 below shows the highest school grade completed, on average, by children of different ages in selected classes; no allowance is made for post-school, or tertiary education, which would accentuate differences. If we take fifteen year-olds, for example, children in upper class, semi-professional and intermediate class households have, on average, completed grade 7. Children of the same age in core working-class households have, on average, completed grade 6 only, whilst children in marginal working-class households have only completed grade 5. By the age of nineteen, differences have widened. On average, children in upper class households have almost completed grade 11, whilst children in marginal working-class households are still some way short of completing grade 8. Class makes a difference of up to three grades by the age of nineteen. Thereafter, differences widen further as many young people in the marginal working-class have dropped out of school. Given the importance of education in determining earnings, children from marginal working class backgrounds are much more likely to end up in marginal working class occupations, and children from upper class backgrounds are much more likely to end up in upper class occupations. Inequality is thus reproduced over time.

*Figure 7. Highest school grade completed, by current age and class, all races, 1993*

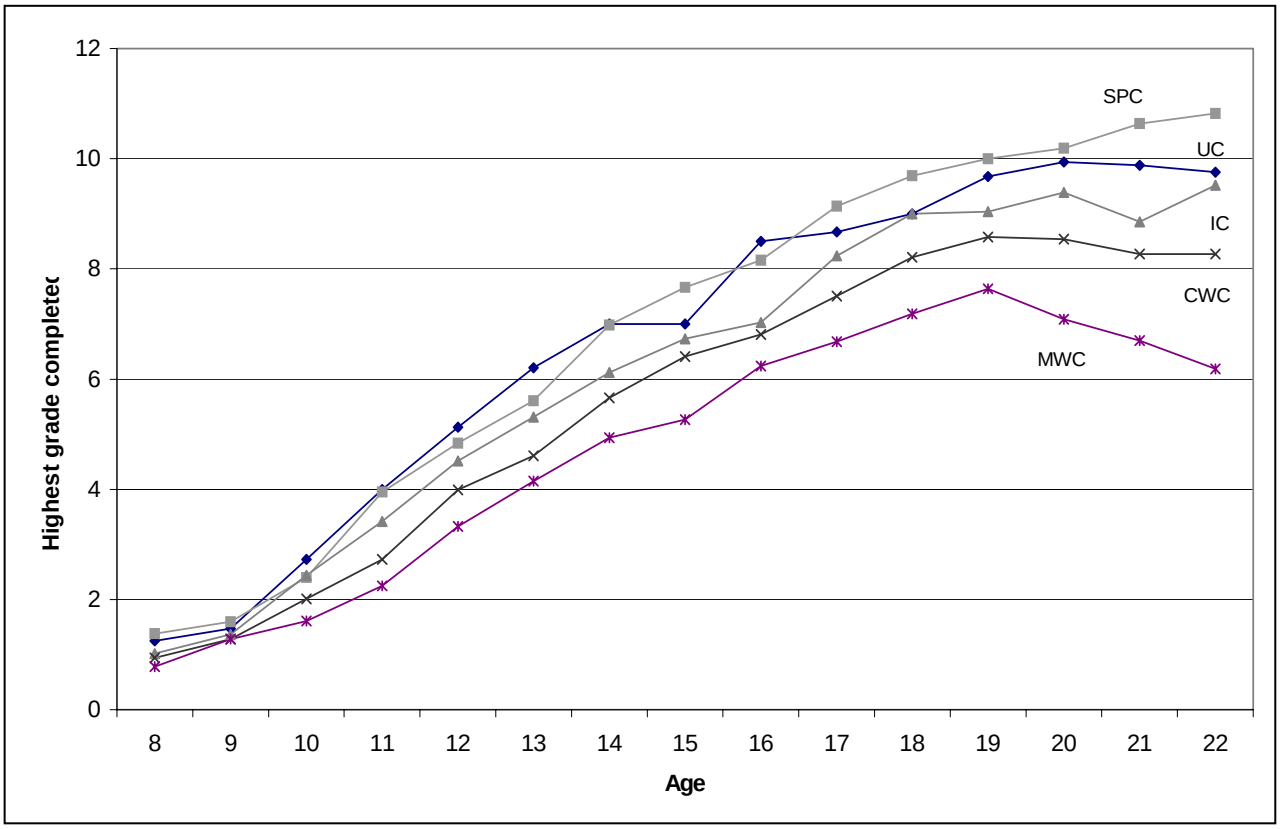



The relationship between class and schooling shown in Figure 7 is not dissimilar to the relationship between race and schooling as shown in other studies. Case and Deaton (1999: Figure II) show a clear relationship between race and schooling, with Indian and white children completing, on average, three grades more than African children by the age of eighteen or nineteen. Lam (1999) shows clear differences by race in the mean years of schooling, and the percentage of each age group that completed grade 7. Is it possible that the relationship posited between class and schooling in Figure 7 is simply a disguised reflection of the relationship between race and schooling?

For sure, there remains a close relationship between race and class, as we saw above. But there are also marked differences in schooling by class even within racial groups. Figure 8 shows the relationship between class and schooling for African children only. It shows that fifteen year-old children in African upper class and semi-professional class households have completed at least two extra grades, on average, compared to children of the same age in African marginal working-class households. By the age of nineteen, differences have widened slightly further. The differences between classes taking African households only are very slightly

smaller than taking all households, but there is nonetheless a very clear relationship: class affects education.

*Figure 8. Highest school grade completed, by current age and class, Africa children only, 1993*




The most interesting difference is that, among African households, children in the semi-professional class have gone the furthest in school, further that is than children in the upper class. Having a teacher or a nurse as a parent is crucial for African children.

The reasons why inequality is reproduced through education are not difficult to identify. Under apartheid, resources were allocated unequally to schools attended by poor and rich children (see Van der Berg, 2001, 2002). Pupil-teacher rations varied (although how important this is, remains unclear – see Case and Deaton, 1999), and the quality of teachers probably varied (see Lemon and Stephens, 1999: 223, 229). This must have some enduring effect. In schools in poor areas there might be no 'culture of learning'. Poor parents spend less than richer parents on their children's education (Case and Deaton, 1999), especially perhaps at the pre-school level. They provide a less conducive home environment, and probably also have less positive attitudes. Within racial groups, educational achievement is also related to parental (especially mother's) schooling, with the children of well-educated parents completing more grades than those with less-educated parents

(Andersen *et al.*, 2001). All of these factors are recognised by the post-apartheid Department of Education (Department of Education, 2000).

## Class, Health and Mortality

In Britain and elsewhere, much of the impetus to the development of empirical class categories came from a concern with differential morbidity and mortality. In South Africa, health statistics are generally published in racial categories alone, with little or no regard to the inequalities that might exist within these racial 'groups'. The result is that we have very little idea as to how 'class', however defined and measured, affects health.

The most comprehensive source of data on health using a representative national sample is the 1998 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS). The DHS collected extensive data on the use of health care services, the medical history and health status of the respondent and other family members, the use of medicines and diet, smoking and other lifestyle issues. Women were also asked about their pregnancy and birth history, the medical history and health of their children, and some questions about surviving and deceased siblings. Anthropometric data was also collected from adults. The survey allows for a close study of inequalities in health and access to health care services. Unfortunately, it is very difficult to link the data on health to social or economic inequality, because inadequate questions were asked about respondents' social and economic positions. Women were asked about their occupations or work, and the occupations or work of their husbands, but not about household income or expenditure. The survey did ask about education and whether the household owned assets such as a radio, washing machine and car.

The published report of the DHS points to some ways in which social and economic inequality may be reflected in unequal health outcomes. There is, for example, a clear relationship between mother's education and infant and child mortality. The probability of a child dying in the first year of life is twice as high for a woman with no education as for one with matric. The probability of a child dying between the ages of one and five years is 1 and 5 is over eight times higher for a woman with standard 3 education or less than for a woman with matric. Infant and child mortality rates are related to living conditions and to the interval since the woman previously gave birth (Department of Health, 1998: 100-105). The incidence of tuberculosis is strongly correlated with education (*ibid*: 177).

Booysen has done further work on the DHS using the data on ownership of durable goods as a proxy for wealth. He found that a very close relationship between wealth and access to doctors and use of contraception, and a weaker relationship between wealth and the immunisation coverage of children (with the two poorest

wealth quintiles having significantly lower coverage than than the richer three wealth quintiles) (Booysen, 2001, 2002). Booysen's measure of wealth could be used to examine the linkage between economic position and health, but this work does not appear to have been done. In addition, the occupational data might be amenable to examining, however crudely, the linkage between class and health. But, again, this work has not been done.

Existing analyses of the DHS data suggest that there might be correlations between class, health and access to health care facilities. But the impediments to constructing class categories using the DHS data make it difficult to say anything more. On the other hand, the PSLSD data (and similarly data from Labour Force Surveys, etc) ask too few questions about health to allow much of an analysis of class and health. Again, the little that can be said is suggestive. Figure 9 shows the proportion of respondents whose father is reported to have died, by the age of the respondent and the class of the respondent's household. This figure provides only a very crude proxy for mortality rates by class. Figure 10 shows the same for respondent's mothers. In both figures, data for the WE classes has been omitted, but it conforms to the general pattern. Overall, fathers and mothers are more likely to have died as the respondent gets older, but within each age cohort there are some clear differences by class. The fathers and mothers of upper class (UC) respondents are less likely to have died than the fathers and mothers of respondents in the lower classes.

*Figure 9. Probability of Father Deceased, by Age and Class of Respondent*

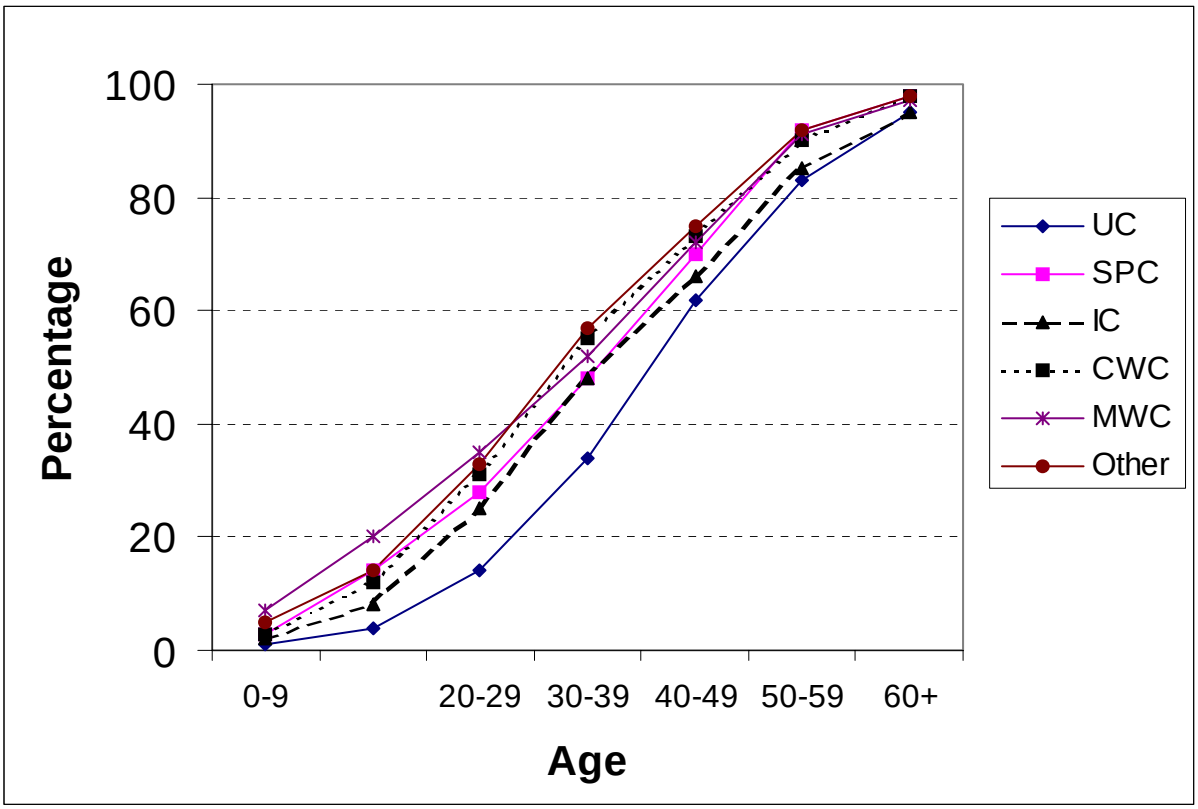
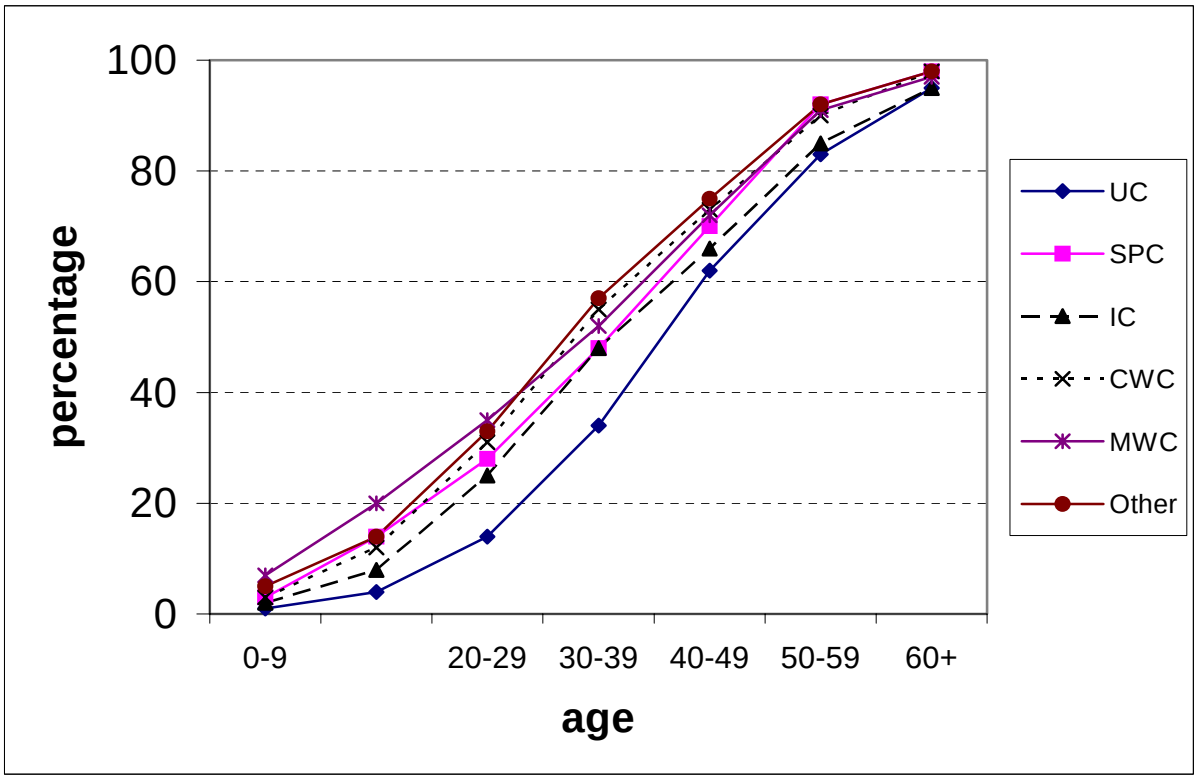



*Figure 10. Probability of Mother Deceased, by Age and Class of Respondent*



It must be emphasised that the parental mortality probabilities in Figures 9 and 10 are crude proxies for mortality rates. In practice, however, the assumptions made in interpreting these probabilities as a proxy for mortality almost certainly result in *underestimating* the effects of class on mortality. First, no account is taken of the age at which the respondents' parents died. A respondent's parents might have been quite elderly when the respondent was born, raising the likelihood that they would have died at any time thereafter. Given that the age of first parenthood is probably higher for higher class individuals, this serves to reduce the difference in probability rates by class. Secondly, the respondent's current class position (or destination, in the language of mobility studies) might not be in the same class occupied by his or her father (or mother) (i.e. the class origins of the respondent). Given that there is an overall pattern of upward occupational mobility, because of the changing occupational structure, this serves to classify many lower class parents as members of the higher classes occupied by their children. Again, this serves to reduce differences in probability rates by class. Thirdly, many respondents in the PSLSD survey have a 'mediated' class position, with the result that the parent's presumed class is in fact derived not from the child's individual class position, but rather from the class of the dominant member of the child's household. Again, mediated class positions are generally raised, such that parents are allocated to a higher class than they should, reducing inter-class probability differences. Overall, therefore, we can safely assume that the differences depicted in Figures 9 and 10 serve to underestimate the significance of class.

Other data from the PSLSD shows little or no relationship between class and health. Infant mortality rates do not seem to vary by class, which is very surprising given the DHS findings reported above. Anthropometric data does not appear to show that higher class babies are taller or fatter than their lower class counterparts. More research needs to be done into these findings.

# 6. Conclusion

This paper is intended to be exploratory. Given the limited data available, what can we say about the class structure? How do we combine an appropriate theoretical foundation with the empirical analysis of the effects of class so as to define classes in a meaningful way? Finally, in what ways does class seem to count and in what ways does it not?

The basic social structure of post-apartheid South Africa is apparent from each of the approaches used in this paper. South Africa is an overwhelmingly employment- and wage-dependent society, with negligible household agricultural production and a small entrepreneurial and informal sector. But it is also a society beset by very

high unemployment. Households in the richer half of the population have members with jobs; very many households in the poorer half of the population do not. Thus a majority of ‘core working class' households (as we have classified them above) are actually in the richer half of the population. The poorer half of the population comprises households dependent on very low-paid workers – mostly farmworkers and domestic workers – or on remittances or pensions.

The analysis above can be interpreted in a range of ways as regards the positions in society of working class households. Looked at one way, almost the whole of society can be considered as ‘working class’, in very broad terms: the category working class could be stretched to include households classified above as ‘intermediate class’ as well as those classified as ‘core’ or ‘marginal working class’, whilst households dependent on remittances could be seen as part of the extended working class, and those dependent on pensions as retired members of the same class. Only the top and bottom deciles would fall outside of the working class if such an elastic interpretation was used.

Looked at another way, however, the working class can be defined far more specifically, as including just households dependent on wages from semi-skilled and unskilled occupations, and can be further divided into core and marginal working class categories. From this perspective, most households in the marginal working class lie below the median, whilst most of the core working class lies above it. The advantage of this approach is that it disaggregates wage-dependent households, and enables us to analyse the differences. Looked at in this way, the membership of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) extends across several classes: semi-professionals (including teachers and nurses), the intermediate class (including office workers, skilled workers, and so on), and the core working class (including semi-skilled and unskilled workers). Almost all of these social groups lie above the median.

The examination of class in this paper may be exhausting, but it is not exhaustive. Other possible differences between households could form the basis of important class divisions. For example, the division of households between those dependent on income from the public sector (whether pensions or earnings) and those paying large sums in taxation might represent an important difference, generating conflicts of interest over taxation and public expenditure. More importantly, we have presented no data on inequalities within households (by gender, age and perhaps other criteria). The importance and implications of intra-household inequality as opposed to inter-household inequality requires further study.

The final section of the paper examined aspects of the significance of class. The evidence considered here suggests, subject to repeated methodological caveats, that

class is closely correlated with a range of other variables, including income, living conditions and satisfaction with life, children's education and health, and adult health. This is, of course, hardly surprising, but none of this has been explored adequately in the past, probably because of the understandable national obsession with race.

There is a crying need for research in very many directions. More recent data-sets (such as the Labour Force Surveys, with their much larger samples) might be interrogated. More careful classifications of occupations might allow for the application of schema based more closely on, say, Goldthorpe's schema. The character of mediated class positions needs further analysis. Patterns of absolute and relative mobility need to be explored, using data on parental occupations. And the consequences of class in a wide variety of areas needs to be probed. Much of this research requires that class is probed in surveys concerned with other issues, such as attitudes and health. Until now, such surveys have collected very poor data on household class or income. Despite the long history of Marxist analysis of and in South Africa, the study of class in South Africa remains in its infancy. But, if more attention is paid to the inequalities of class in survey and other research, then we concur with Goldthorpe and Marshall's conclusion (applied to Northern societies, see Goldthorpe & Marshall, 1997) that class analysis has an unprecedentedly promising future.

# Appendix: Goldthorpe's Class Schema

Service classes

I. Higher-grade professionals, administrators and officials; managers in large industrial establishments; large proprietors.
II. Lower-grade professionals, administrators and officials; higher-grade technicians; managers in small business and industrial establishments; supervisors of non-manual employees.

Intermediate

III. Routine nonmanual: largely clerical; employees in administration and commerce; rank-and-file employees in services; this class may be divided into IIIa (higher grade, administration and commerce) and IIIb (lower grade, sales and services).
IV. Small proprietors and self-employed artisans: this may be divided into IVa (small proprietors etc with employees), IVb (without employees) and IVc (farmers etc).
V. Lower-grade technicians, superviors of manual workers.

Working classes

VI. Skilled manual workers.
VII. Semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers: this may be divided between VIIa (not in agriculture) and VIIb (in agriculture).

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# The Centre for Social Science Research

The CSSR is an umbrella organisation comprising five units:

The Aids and Society Research Unit (ASRU) supports quantitative and qualitative research into the social and economic impact of the HIV pandemic in Southern Africa. Focus areas include: the economics of reducing mother to child transmission of HIV, the impact of HIV on firms and households; and psychological aspects of HIV infection and prevention. ASRU operates an outreach programme in Khayelitsha (the Memory Box Project) which provides training and counselling for HIV positive people

The Data First Resource Unit ('Data First') provides training and resources for research. Its main functions are: 1) to provide access to digital data resources and specialised published material; 2) to facilitate the collection, exchange and use of data sets on a collaborative basis; 3) to provide basic and advanced training in data analysis; 4) the ongoing development of a web site to disseminate data and research output.

The Democracy In Africa Research Unit (DARU) supports students and scholars who conduct systematic research in the following three areas: 1) public opinion and political culture in Africa and its role in democratisation and consolidation; 2) elections and voting in Africa; and 3) the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on democratisation in Southern Africa. DARU has developed close working relationships with projects such as the Afrobarometer (a cross national survey of public opinion in fifteen African countries), the Comparative National Elections Project, and the Health Economics and AIDS Research Unit at the University of Natal.

The Social Surveys Unit (SSU) promotes critical analysis of the methodology, ethics and results of South African social science research. One core activity is the Cape Area Panel Study of young adults in Cape Town. This study follows 4800 young people as they move from school into the labour market and adulthood. The SSU is also planning a survey for 2004 on aspects of social capital, crime, and attitudes toward inequality.

The Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit (SALDRU) was established in 1975 as part of the School of Economics and joined the CSSR in 2002. SALDRU conducted the first national household survey in 1993 (the Project for Statistics on Living Standards and Development). More recently, SALDRU ran the Langeberg Integrated Family survey (1999) and the Khayelitsha/Mitchell's Plain Survey (2000). Current projects include research on public works programmes, poverty and inequality.